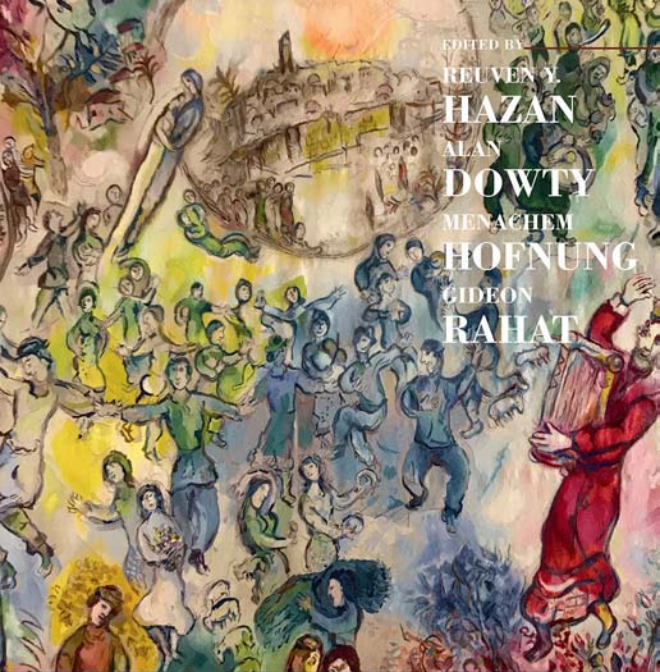




EDITED BY
REUVEN Y.
HAZAN
ALAN
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GIDEON
RAHAT

≡ The Oxford Handbook of
**ISRAELI POLITICS
AND SOCIETY**

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*To Patty Glaser, for her passionate support of
Israeli democracy and society.*

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INTRODUCTION TO ISRAELI POLITICS AND SOCIETY

REUVEN Y. HAZAN, ALAN DOWTY,
MENACHEM HOFNUNG, AND GIDEON RAHAT

ISRAEL is frequently in the news, largely as a result of conflict and violence both within and near the country. Few countries outside the major powers receive as much attention. Unfortunately, this focus on Israel is often coupled with a deep misunderstanding about Israeli democracy and how it works. The intense interest surrounding Israel in the media and in academia highlights the importance of a comprehensive resource that enhances the understanding of key aspects of Israeli politics and society. That is the guiding principle of this handbook.

There were, and there are, general textbooks on Israeli democracy and government—albeit fewer today, in 2021, than only a decade or two ago. Yet, while Israel becomes more interesting to both academics and general readers, an authoritative source for its advanced study does not exist. This situation of increased scholarly activity in a developing field on the one hand and a lack of core advanced texts on the other is anomalous, to say the least. Thus, an authoritative and comprehensive state-of-the-art handbook bringing together the leading Israeli and international figures in the field is needed.

The chapters in this volume are written either by authors who have built internationally recognized careers as acknowledged authorities on their subjects or by younger scholars who have already been singled out as emerging figures in the field. The handbook offers a systematic assessment of each topic, outlining the most relevant developments over time, while not shying away from the conflicts both in and around Israel as well as the problems facing the country. It offers a wide-ranging treatment of an intriguing country, one that is often misunderstood, in a manner that is accessible to advanced undergraduate students as well as graduate students and scholars. We trust

that this will make the handbook useful not only to scholars, but also as a textbook of choice in advanced courses on Israeli politics and society.

While this work will be of particular interest to Israeli students and scholars, it is designed to be accessible to non-Israeli readers, as well as nonspecialists generally, who have little background in the field. It offers an overview that focuses on the historical development of Israeli democracy in order to understand the forces currently at work. In doing so, it presents opposed narratives in full force, leaving judgment up to the reader. We have tried to represent the cutting edge in the field of Israel studies, focusing on core and classic approaches but also including newer approaches and the work of younger scholars who have enriched the field in recent years.

We also believe that this handbook will be of great interest to students and scholars of comparative politics generally. Interest in Israel is a result of not only its visibility on the world political scene, but also its standing as one of the very few continuously functioning democracies since World War II outside Europe or the British Commonwealth. Since the end of World War II, Israel is the only country that came out of colonial rule and has maintained uninterrupted rule by democratically elected institutions for more than seven decades (since the elections to the first Knesset in 1949). Israel can be in many ways a test case for theories on how democracy functions in a deeply divided society or in a state engaged in intense conflict. The role and influence of external conflict in Israeli politics and society is covered here, but is not taken as the main determinant of internal politics, as is sometimes assumed.

ARE ISRAELI POLITICS AND SOCIETY COMPARABLE?

The answer is clearly and straightforwardly yes, Israeli politics and society are comparable. Only those who want, on the one hand, to demonize or, on the other hand, to idealize Israel may shy away from a comparison. Even the claim that Israel is unique needs to be based on a comparison to other countries. However, Israel is not unique, and even if it were, this could only be determined through comparison, and thus uniqueness is not the opposite of comparison. We follow the comparative logic in this handbook, conducting comparisons either to other countries or to Israel's past, employing concepts, models, and tools that are used globally to assess and analyze the various aspects of a country's political system and its society.

Israel is different for many reasons: the historical reasons that brought about its formation, such as the pre-state Jewish immigration and society building project in mandatory Palestine, as well as the Holocaust; its definition as a Jewish and democratic state and the existence of freedom of, but not freedom from, religion; its lack of recognized international borders and the majority-minority relations between the Jewish and Arab populations; its protracted state of war and the resulting interpenetration

between military and civil/political elites; and more. Nevertheless, uniqueness and normalcy are not dichotomous; they are more of a spectrum. And while Israel is clearly more on the unique side of the spectrum, it possesses enough similarities among the different characteristics of its political system and social makeup that it does indeed have much to offer others. For example, assessing the status of the Arab minority in Israel can best be done by employing comparative analytical tools (Dowty, 1999a, 1999b; Lustick, 1980; Peled, 2014; Smootha, 1997, 2002). The same is true for religious–state relations in Israel (Hazan, 2000; Liebman & Don-Yehiya, 1984) and even for Israel’s control of the Palestinians—which can be compared to British rule in many countries, to French rule in Algeria, or to Dutch colonialism in Indonesia. Comparative politics does not search for identical countries to assess; it asks if there is enough of a common base for making a comparison, which means that uniqueness is dependent on the comparative context. All countries are unique in some context, and all can be compared in other contexts. If the research agenda is appropriate for including the Israeli case, then it should do so.

Indeed, it is easier to exclude Israel because it is a difficult case, just as it is easier for Israeli political scientists to focus only on Israel (for opposing perspectives on Israel’s comparability by Israeli political scientists, see Dror, 1996; Neuberger, 1989; Sharkansky, 1999; Yakobson, 2008; see also Barnett, 1996; Levi-Faur, Sheffer, & Vogel, 1999), but this omission is to the detriment of all. Difficulty and complexity do not necessarily mean uniqueness, and total resemblance is not only impossible but also uninteresting. Outliers are not unique; their difference can, in fact, highlight important factors that are not easily observed elsewhere, contribute to building more robust hypotheses, fortify the causal chain, and make the arguments more generalizable.

An example of the reciprocity between Israel studies and comparative politics is the work of two of the co-editors of this handbook and their study of candidate selection methods. Interest in this topic started after several political parties in Israel introduced wide-ranging reforms to their candidate selection methods in the mid-1990s, which quickly produced significant political consequences (Hazan, 1997). The research undertaken by the two coauthors set the stage for a more comprehensive assessment of the emerging phenomenon of democracy within parties (Hazan & Rahat, 2006; Pennings & Hazan, 2001; Rahat, 2007; Rahat & Hazan, 2001). After over a decade of research, they wrote a comprehensive book on the topic (Hazan & Rahat, 2010). The Israeli experience thus generated scholarly attention, and the investigative approach adopted served to place Israel within a comparative perspective. This attention resulted in the most widely cited article and chapter and one of the most cited books on the topic (Hazan & Rahat, 2006, 2010; Rahat & Hazan, 2001). Comparing Israel has thus contributed toward producing the standard conceptual and theoretical framework for a growing number of publications around the world on the topic of candidate selection (for example, Cordero & Collier, 2018; Cross et al. 2016; Sandri, Seddone, & Venturino, 2015).

The disciplinary obstacles facing a comparative study including Israel are exacerbated by political agendas. Designating Israel as unique, placing it in a marginal category, is an agenda driven by political considerations as much—and at times even more so—as by academic criteria. The political passions of the Arab–Israeli conflict have reinforced

Israel's isolation from collective and comparative academic projects. Arab scholars—and sometimes more important, Arab funding—treat Israel as a pariah state. Coupled with the axiom of Israel's incomparability by scholars in general, the influence of political considerations exacerbates Israel as an uncommon country, shunned from many international exchanges and ostracized at many academic conferences.

But while Israel is different from other countries in the Middle East, and as such presents research interests that are not the same as the intellectual agenda of Middle East studies, it also shares some significant similarities and concerns with its neighbors—the interplay between religion and politics and a multifaceted and large military–industrial complex are but two examples. However, since the other Middle Eastern countries are not democratic, comparing Israel is a task not necessarily for Middle East studies but instead for comparative democracy studies in general. In the discipline of comparative political studies, Israel is less different than many of the case studies available, especially in the postcommunist period where many more countries are democratic and present countless more varieties than were available in the post–World War II period.

The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, prominent in academic circles and led by academics, has both benefitted from and furthered the exclusion of Israel from collaborative research projects. Ironically, the latter tactic is clearly counterproductive, hurting the more liberal elements in Israel who are disproportionately found in academia and who are against many of the same elements the movement claims to oppose, while it serves to strengthen both the isolation of dissenting academics within Israel and the arguments of those they are up against (De Shalit, 2016).

Even some of Israel's most zealous supporters use Israel's uniqueness as a justification for its faults. This may be an appropriate strategy for public relations, but it is not the case for academic analysis. The editors of this book argue that comparison, not idealization, is the best response to those who demonize Israel, for several reasons. First, Israelis themselves would be better off if, in the process of deciding how and what to improve in their democracy, they learned from comparison. Second, only through comparison can one point out what aspects of Israeli politics and society differ from those of other democratic nations.

For academic and political reasons, Israel's normalcy is denied by both supporters and detractors, inside the country and internationally. The argument that Israel is exceptional brings many to rally behind it, whatever the merits of the case. Given this, one might expect the discipline of political science to be at the forefront of the exclusion campaign, but it is not. Israeli political scientists are welcomed on the editorial boards of top journals, serve on the executive committees of prestigious associations, receive competitive international research grants, have appointments in the highest ranked academic institutions, and direct major comparative workshops and conferences. For example, the first-ever special issue of the prominent journal *Party Politics* dedicated to a single country was devoted to Israel (Hazan & Rahat, 2008). Apparently, those who have been trained to conduct analytical studies of politics and society understand that Israel is more normal than many would think. They recognize that Israel can contribute toward the advancement of academic discussion on many important issues facing

politics and society in general and democracy in particular, and they acknowledge that crisis-driven passions should not help mold common academic research agendas. This does not mean that Israel is “accepted” in comparative political science, but that it is relatively less excluded; one cannot imagine a democracy ranking these days that would leave Israel out. That is, even in political science, the overall research agenda is not one that perceives Israel as “normal.” And where comparative politics is organized on a geographic basis—where Israel appears in the context of Middle East studies—the study of Israel will almost certainly encounter a politically charged adverse environment. A similar case calling for a better incorporation of Israel to benefit the discipline was recently made against its under-utilization and isolation in International Relations (Sasley, 2020).

This handbook argues that Israel is not unique. Yes, Israel is different, but this does not invalidate including the Israeli case from comparative assessments. What operates in Israel, above the micro level, operates elsewhere as well. The special characteristics of Israeli politics and society, or the special way in which they are assembled in Israel, can be understood better in comparative perspective and can contribute to theory building and testing in comparative politics.

This informs the goals and organization of the handbook: on the one hand, there are chapters examining distinguishing characteristics of Israel, such as the complex relations between Ashkenazi (European) and Sephardi (Middle Eastern) Jews that result from the idiosyncratic immigration history. On the other hand, the bulk of this handbook is devoted to such key concepts in comparative politics as electoral behavior, political culture, and parties and the party system. The study of Israel provides insight into communal cleavages, deep-set clashes over religion, and ethnic divisions in a conflictual democratic environment. For example, the concept of consociational or power-sharing democracy (Lijphart, 1977), based on bargaining among major social groups, has been very valuable in understanding informal power relations in Israel—and this study has in turn enriched the theories of consociationalism. The handbook covers these topics from a comparative and/or theoretical perspective, using concepts and frameworks in the discipline of political science in order to assess the Israeli context—and vice versa. Troen’s chapter on Israel as a field of study makes the point that there is abundant diversity in Israel studies, but we argue that diversity is not a substitute for comparative political analysis.

Israel is functionally important and relevant for comparative politics, as comparative politics is vital for a better understanding of Israel. This volume in general, and its editors in particular, believe that Israel can and should be assessed with categories and frameworks that are comparatively derived. Although Sartori (1976, p. 154) equivocated between categorizing Israel, despite its fragmentation, alongside other “moderate” polities and claiming “yet Israel is more *sui generis* than that”—something that could be argued as a uniquely Italian assertion—he nevertheless included Israel in his research, from his eminent 1976 book on parties and party systems, to his 1994 assessment of comparative constitutional engineering (Sartori, 1994), to his keynote participation in a conference in Israel that produced a collaborative comparative volume on politics and society in Israel (Sartori, 2000). Understanding Israel, or Israel’s self-understanding, as unique is clearly wrong.

THE SECTIONS AND CHAPTERS

The handbook is divided into five sections. An introductory section presents a basic framework of analysis covering the historical, demographic, and social dimensions of the development of the Israeli state, its democracy, the wars it faced, and an overview of Israel studies as an academic field. The second section, on Israeli society, includes specific chapters dealing in depth with the major divisions in Israel along ethnic, religious, social, communal, immigrant, and gender lines, including how public opinion is divided. The third section delineates the institutions built from, and in turn impacting, these divisions and issues, covering the lack of a constitutional setting, the three branches of government, the parties, the electoral system, public administration, and the political institutions of the Palestinian minority. The fourth section deals with Israel and the world, beginning with national security and followed by several chapters assessing the influence of the Palestinians, the territories, and the Arab world on Israeli politics, and then addressing relations with the United States and the Jewish diaspora. Finally, the fifth section focuses on specific issues areas in the interplay between Israeli politics and society, covering the territories, religion, the role of the military, civil society, political culture, electoral behavior, the media, and the economy.

The sections and chapters in this handbook correspond to most of the syllabi on Israeli politics, allowing courses to adopt it quite easily. Moreover, although there are some issues and approaches that are not the subject of dedicated chapters—such as terrorism, civil rights, and social movements—we are not ignoring them. Such issues are taken up as warranted, and are discussed repeatedly, in various chapters.

Part I provides a historical, demographic, and conceptual framework for the handbook. Ilan Troen begins, in Chapter 1, with a survey of the development of Israel studies as an academic field. As he shows, introspective works on the Zionist project accompanied that project from its earliest days in the late nineteenth century. As academic institutions emerged in the Jewish *Yishuv* during the Mandate period, this introspection matured into academic research, heavily influenced at the time by European models. U.S. scholarship and scholars became more influential over time, leading to the emergence of Israel studies on an international scale, marked by the founding of the Association for Israel Studies in 1985. More recently, the field has become more globalized, with growing participation of non-Israeli and non-Jewish scholars in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere.

In Chapter 2, Sergio DellaPergola fills in the fundamental demographic dimension of modern Israel. Beginning with a broad historical perspective emphasizing wide fluctuations over time, the chapter charts the mass movements of Jews and Arabs that have created modern Israel, including the signal issue of the present balance in Mandatory Palestine—Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza—taken as a whole. Finally, DellaPergola presents population projections for Israel and the Jewish people that underline the future emergence of Israel as home to a majority of the world's Jews.

Orit Rozin, in Chapter 3, focuses on the sociological dimension of building a new state and society in Israel's early years as a nation. This process, as she shows, also had its

roots in earlier Zionist efforts to create a new Hebrew culture and a “new Jew.” Though greatly dependent on outside powers and the Jewish Diaspora, Israel did manage to establish and maintain meaningful sovereignty and independence in these early years.

Anita Shapira supplies, in Chapter 4, the political framework of the Jewish community in Palestine before statehood and of Israel since then. The two periods are tied together by the dominance of the Left from the 1930s until the “upheaval” of 1977, which fundamentally changed the context of Israeli politics. The Left’s focus had been on a social democratic agenda, but with the rise of the Right, Israel moved toward a free enterprise economy and the central axis of politics became security issues. Shapira also documents the growing polarization in Israeli politics along ideological, communal, religious, and ethnic lines.

In Chapter 5, Alan Dowty addresses the question of Israel’s standing as a democracy. Assuming that Israel should be judged by the same standards as other nation-states, he cites standard rankings of states on a democracy scale that have consistently classified Israel as a democracy, if sometimes a flawed one. This democracy has its roots in a traditional Jewish politics that emphasized voluntary consent and inclusion. The weaknesses of this democracy are primarily in problem areas related to the Arab–Israeli conflict and to the status of Israel’s Arab citizens; in recent years, challenges regarding the latter issue have become more prominent in Israeli political debate.

No framework for the study of Israel would be complete without considering the impact of Israel’s frequent wars and military campaigns. David Tal, in Chapter 6, presents an overview of this history with an emphasis on how the challenges and responses have changed over time. From conventional warfare with regular armies, Israel now finds itself engaged in “low-intensity conflicts,” primarily with nonstate armed organizations. Decisive military victories are no longer in the offing; conquest of territory and destruction of enemy forces are no longer the key measures of military success.

Part II provides an analysis of the social fabric in Israel, and it includes chapters dealing with the major divisions in Israel along ethnic, religious, social, communal, immigrant, and gender lines. In Chapter 7, Uri Ram offers a sociohistorical overview of four major cleavages in Israeli society: the national cleavage between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs; the cultural cleavage between secular and religious Jews; the socioeconomic (or class) cleavage between rich and poor; and the ethnic cleavage between Ashkenazi Jews and Mizrahi Jews (or “Westerners” versus “Orientals”). These four cleavages have played decisive roles in shaping the main left–right political schism in Israel since the 1970s. Still, the national cleavage between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs is the most salient, clearly dividing Israeli society and politics into two distinct contending categories.

In Chapter 8, Itzhak Galnoor looks deeply into the tenuous situation of the Arab minority in the Jewish State of Israel. Galnoor notes that, on the one hand, the ruling government (during the years 2015–2020) uses its majority to legislate laws that undermine the status and legitimacy of the Arab citizens. On the other hand, the same government recognizes the justification for equality, particularly in economic terms—but this is confined to the rights of the Arabs as individual citizens only, not as an indigenous

distinct community. Galnoor calls for the state to recognize the Arabs as a community of Israeli citizens, rather than their separate political–national rights.

Asher Cohen, in Chapter 9, looks at the relations between religion, society, and the state. Cohen argues that from a comparative perspective Israel is far from the model of separation between religion and state, incorporating a mix of characteristics from both the recognized denominations and official church models. Israel maintains a relatively high level of freedom of religion, but does not offer freedom from religion, saliently expressed in the fact that Israel is the only democratic state with no provision for civil marriage. At the turn of the millennium, with the increasing influence of religious parties, Israel still wrestles with a wide range of unresolved issues pertaining to religion, society, and state, reflecting its inability to reach stable and consensual solutions.

In Chapter 10, Adane Zawdu and Sarah S. Willen explore how constructions of Jewish nativeness in Israel have changed in relation to successive immigration processes. Taking sociocultural and political dynamics as their focus, the chapter examines the cultural and institutional practices through which the notion of Jewish nativeness, its boundaries, and its logic of inclusion and exclusion were constructed and enforced in four historical periods. Zawdu and Willen examine the Israeli case in light of broader scholarly conversations about the practices and processes through which grounds for groupness and boundary work can adapt and persist across significant periods of social and political change.

The Ashkenazi/Sephardi cleavage (or Westerner/Oriental cleavage) is explored by Sammy Smootha in Chapter 11. Smootha shows that the bases of the right-wing parties are nondominant and low-socioeconomic-status Jews, including Mizrahim, Russian immigrants, and the religious, who are more nationalistic and less liberal than the financially better-off supporters of the left-center. He concludes that the demographic predominance of right-wing party supporters gives the political right a lead in vying for power, makes Israel more Jewish than democratic, and reduces the chances for peace-making with the Palestinians.

In Chapter 12, Reut Itzkovitch-Malka looks at gender politics in Israel. She describes how feminist discourse gradually became prevalent among women from all segments of society: Jewish and Palestinian, Ashkenazi and Mizrachi, heterosexual and gay, religious and secular, immigrants and natives, and more. Still, while women have made great strides in all areas of life—political, social, legal, economic, and cultural—true gender equality remains, at this point, a distant vision.

Palestinian politics in Israel in the shadow of the Arab Spring is the topic of Chapter 13 by Amal Jamal, who looks at the conceptualization and practices of resistance in Palestinian society in Israel. The discursive debates among Palestinians in Israel demonstrate that their inspiration by the popular mobilizations in the Arab world is balanced by the fear of losing the standard of living that they have achieved in Israel, despite the state's discriminatory policies.

Tamar Hermann presents and analyzes, in Chapter 14, the long-standing features of Israeli (political) public opinion in light of the main sociodemographic and political cleavages. She argues that on many critical issues there are several well-identified and

deeply rooted “public opinions,” rather than one coherent opinion. Based on the empirical data presented in this chapter, the main divisions are between Israeli Jews and Arabs; the Jewish Right and Left; and the different groups on the religiosity scale—from the secular to the ultra-Orthodox. Hermann further argues that in the kind of political culture that has evolved in recent years, politicians target specific audiences while delegitimizing others. This, in turn, contributes to the deepening of the divisions at the public opinion level and to the further erosion of the already quite thin Israeli national consensus.

Part III assesses the main political institutions in Israel. In Chapter 15, Gregory Mahler explains the “unwritten” constitution that has evolved over time, producing a series of Basic Laws—the chapters of Israel’s constitution in the making—and how this has influenced the operation of Israeli politics. He argues that the constitutional status of these Basic Laws creates a flexible structure leaving many elements open to debate, such as the proper role of the Supreme Court and how its actions affect, and are affected by, the parliament.

The section then turns toward an in-depth delineation of the three branches of government. In Chapter 16, Ofer Kenig delineates the executive branch, which in Israel’s parliamentary democracy is based on a multiparty system; this underlies and outlines the process and the types of coalition governments formed. Kenig then addresses the process of cabinet formation, assesses the position of the prime minister (described as one of the busiest chief executives in the world) and the structure of cabinet, and evaluates the claims about executive instability in Israel.

The legislative branch is the focus of Chapter 17, by Chen Friedberg and Reuven Y. Hazan. They describe how Israel’s unicameral parliament is the main source of all political power in Israel’s centralized and unitary democracy and how it reflects Israeli society. They then explain the legislative and oversight roles, in the plenary and in the committee arenas, and investigate how structural, legal, procedural, and historical constraints influence the operation of the legislature, concluding with an assessment of legislative–executive–judicial relations and the role of the opposition.

Chapter 18, by Menachem Hofnung and Mohammed S. Wattad, addresses the judicial branch. They explain how the perception of judicial independence has evolved over time, which started with it being perceived as essentially an arm of the executive branch. They then delineate how its powers of judicial review have grown and how the legitimacy of this has been publicly and politically debated. The chapter concludes by outlining the continued attempts to limit the court’s ability to influence executive and legislative decisions, with an added emphasis on the political entanglement of 2019–2020.

Israel’s electoral system is the topic of Chapter 19 by Matthew S. Shugart, who defines it as an “extreme” example of proportional representation because of its use of a single nationwide district, a constant feature since 1949, alongside secondary features such as legal thresholds and the proportional seat allocation formula. By applying the seat product model to indices of election outcomes, this chapter analyzes whether Israel’s party system is more or less fragmented and proportional than expected as a result of its electoral design.

Chapter 20, by Reuven Y. Hazan, is on the political parties and the party system in Israel. It begins by delineating the transformation of the parties in Israel, from classic

mass parties to a plethora of types that coexist somewhat uneasily, and from parties focused on socioeconomic issues to ones dominated by security concerns. It then assesses the changes in the party system, arguing that there is surprising stability if one looks at party blocs, not individual parties, but that in the past twenty-five years there has been increasing volatility.

Chapter 21, by Sharon Gilad and Nissim Cohen, analyzes bureaucratic politics in Israel, presenting a two-tiered power game between bureaucratic and political players, pointing out the vast influence of the Ministry of Finance on Israel's political agenda, which has an institutional advantage over other ministries. They argue that the policy influence of bureaucracies is shaped both by stable institutional factors and by the extent to which powerful politicians are inclined to intervene in order to overcome an increasingly fragmented coalition government.

Gideon Rahat, in Chapter 22, describes Israel's experience, both failed and successful, in reforming its democratic institutions. He argues that even the successful reforms have not helped resolve the main problems facing the functioning of Israel's political institutions—the extreme features of its electoral system—and often have made them worse.

This section ends with Chapter 23, by As'ad Ghanem, focusing on the political institutions representing the Palestinian minority in Israeli politics. It elaborates the phases in the transformation of this community, describing those organizations that function as an integral part of Israeli politics, alongside those that avoid cooperation and try to distance themselves from Israel's political institutions.

Part IV covers Israel's external relations, beginning with core Israeli–Palestinian and Arab–Israeli issues and extending to the key U.S. relationships, global perspectives, and relations with the Jewish Diaspora. Chuck Freilich, in Chapter 24, presents an overview of Israel's national security policy as it has evolved over time in response to changes in the nature of threats. The threat of defeat and destruction in a conventional war has receded, to be replaced by threats of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, missile attacks, and cyberwarfare. Freilich outlines the Israeli responses to the changing strategic environment, including adjustment to “asymmetrical” warfare and the role of Israel's nuclear weapons posture.

Oren Barak, in Chapter 25, discusses Israel's policy in and toward the Palestinian territories—the West Bank and Gaza—occupied since the 1967 war. As Barak demonstrates, this policy was basically formulated in the decade following the war, though there have been changes since then linked to the two Palestinian uprisings (*intifadas*), the Israel–Palestinian peace process, and the withdrawal from Gaza. Finally, Barak raises the issue of the implications of protracted occupation of the West Bank for Israel itself.

In Chapter 26, Avraham Sela addresses the broader question of Israel's relations with the Palestinians as a people, from the onset of the conflict down to the present impasse. Beginning with the denial of Palestinian national rights, he traces the development of negotiated agreements and coexistence with a self-governing Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza. However, the collapse of the Oslo process since 2000 has, in this analysis, brought the relationship to an impasse from which there seems to be no ready solution.

Itamar Rabinovich, in Chapter 27, analyzes the yet broader subject of Israel's relations with Arab states in the course of the conflict. Arab states became front-line combatants as a result of the 1948–1949 war, but the 1967 war created incentives for them to disengage in the framework of “land for peace” agreements. Focus shifted back to the 3 core states. More recently Iran—a non-Arab state—has emerged as a major threat, and this has had a moderating effect on the attitude of Sunni Arab states toward Israel.

The relationship between the United States and Israel is, as defined by Kenneth W. Stein in Chapter 28, complicated, dynamic, multidimensional, and enduring. Stein emphasizes four factors that have shaped the close ties: deep Jewish involvement in the U.S. electoral system; U.S. governmental reactions to objectionable Arab acts; U.S. concern over regional threats such as Soviet influence, Islamic radicalism, and Iranian challenges; and Washington's relationship with oil-producing states. Despite disagreements over such subjects as the Iranian nuclear agreement, the relationship has remained strong under different administrations.

Colin Shindler, in Chapter 29, outlines the major forces—beyond the U.S. relationship—that have determined Israel's place globally. On the one hand, during the early statehood period, Soviet hostility pushed the new nation into closer relations with the West. Decolonization and the rise of the Third World likewise complicated Israel's relations with Asian and African nations that tended to sympathize with the Palestinians. One consequence was stronger relations with “pariah” states that also faced international isolation, such as South Africa. On the other hand, the end of the Cold War and the Oslo Accords made it possible for Israel to establish relations with more nations than ever before, including major powers such as China and India.

Mira Sucharov explains in Chapter 30 how Israel's relationship with the Jewish Diaspora in the twenty-first century is increasingly concerned with intense debates over Zionism, the Palestinian issue, and the nature of Jewish attachment to Israel. Institutions such as the pro-Israel lobby in the United States, in this analysis, have become focal points for intense debates over such issues as opposition to the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement against Israel and the future of religious pluralism in Israel.

Part V, the final section, delineates main issues in Israeli politics and society. In Chapter 31, Arie Perliger and Ami Pedahzur explain the success of the “settlement project.” After a brief overview of the origins and evolution of the settlement project, they provide three complementary explanations for this success: the settlers' ability to establish effective networks of influence within the Israeli public administration; their successful branding, which associated the settlements with the traditional Zionist ethos; and their movement to the mainstream of the political system. They conclude by assessing the ability of the settler community to continue to utilize similar methods of political activism and policymaking in the future.

Guy Ben-Porat provides, in Chapter 32, an overview of the important role that religion and the religious–secular contention has played in Israeli politics. In the early years of statehood, religious politics was contained by common goals, secular ambivalence toward religion, and a political leadership able to create agreements, formal and informal, known as the status quo. But since the 1990s, economic, demographic, and sociocultural

changes undermined previous agreements and religious questions became politicized. Israeli governments failed to mediate between the new demands of secular and religious groups. Political actions outside the formal political sphere combined with traditional politics became a way for Israelis to struggle for and against religious authority.

In Chapter 33, Yoram Peri examines the deepening of the gap between civil society and the military in Israel since the turn of the twenty-first century. He argues that this gap resulted from fifty years of occupation of the Palestinian territories, changes in the nature of wars, demographic developments, and the transformation of civil values. Peri demonstrates that the military is well aware of this development and that it tries to cope with it through implementing a series of mechanisms aimed at reducing the gap, dealing with the expectations of civilian groups, reconstructing the military structure and normative code, and even introducing a new model of conscription. He also suggests an analysis of the repercussions of these steps and various scenarios for future developments of civil–military relations in Israel.

Yael Yishai, in Chapter 34, examines the role of civil society in Israel in promoting or inhibiting democratic consolidation. She analyzes civil society's role in enhancing mobilization, integration, and confrontation and finds that, in terms of these parameters, civil society has had only a modest contribution to democracy. Mobilization is broad, but it is more ritual than real; civil society does not play a significant role in enhancing tolerance and mutual respect, and challenging authority is limited. Moreover, she argues that it is the adverse aspects of civil society, allied with the government coalition and mainstream ideology, that are gaining visibility, significance, and influence in public life.

In Chapter 35, Gal Ariely provides a broad overview of Israeli political culture. He starts by discussing whether a single political culture can indeed be identified in Israel and then turns to surveying the principal factors that shape political culture. The chapter presents the key changes over time, from the early days of nation-building attempts to Israel's current, more multicultural character. It then turns to analyze Israeli political culture from a cross-national perspective, analyzing aspects of system support and democratic norms. He concludes that Israeli political culture is dominated by countervailing forces that create a combination of assertive and allegiant forms of citizenship.

Assaf Shapira and Gideon Rahat review, analyze, and explain, in Chapter 36, the general patterns of electoral behavior in national elections in Israel. They examine both patterns of voter turnout and the choice of a specific party. They argue that the types of factors that explain variance and trends in these behavioral patterns are not unique to Israel and that the specific relative weight of each factor clearly tells much of the story of Israeli politics. These include, especially, the influence of religiosity on Jewish voting patterns and the separate development in voting patterns (turnout and party choice) in the minority population of Arab citizens.

In Chapter 37, Dana Markowitz-Elfassi, Tamir Sheafer, Yariv Tsfati, Gabriel Weimann, and Gadi Wolfsfeld offer a critical discussion of the symbiosis between media and politics in Israel. They argue that while, theoretically, the Israeli media operates in a pluralistic,

democratic, and advanced sociopolitical climate, de facto, most of the media suffers from fragmentation, economic instability, and heavy political pressures. They contend that these characteristics have also rapidly invaded social and online media. The chapter offers an overview of the structural, political, and economic characteristics of the Israeli news media. It also outlines characteristics of the Israeli media coverage of politics in the news, election campaigns, and political satire in terms of framing, mediatization, negativity, personalization, and political bias.

In the final chapter of the handbook, Chapter 38, Ronen Mandelkern and Michael Shalev look at the transformation of Israel's political economy since the 1980s, from a developmental to a neoliberal model. They describe and explain this transformation, emphasizing the unevenness and incompleteness of liberalization and its impact on socio-economic inequality. They argue that liberalization was led by economic technocrats in state agencies, guided by liberal economic ideas, simultaneously pursuing their interest in greater authority and autonomy. While these technocrats were empowered by re-engineering economic policy institutions and by cooperating with other political actors, their ability to fulfill their goals was limited because of the continuing power of some sectors of both business and labor and the continuing vibrancy of the state's national and military projects. The chapter ends with a discussion of recent challenges to neoliberalism in Israel.

In conclusion, Israel studies is both an established and yet a developing field, witnessing an increase in international scholarly activity that is reflected in this authoritative and comprehensive state-of-the-art handbook. The handbook brings together the leading Israeli and international figures in the field, in light of the growing interest that Israeli politics and society elicits internationally, places Israel within a comparative framework, and addresses an academic lacuna of long standing.

As the chapters in this volume demonstrate, Jewish history and the modern state of Israel have both been characterized by an ongoing synthesis of the particularistic and the universal. Observers have noted the presence of two Israels: a "traditional" Israel that is more particularistic, communitarian, religious, and conservative alongside a "civic" Israel that is more universalist, individualistic, secular, and liberal. Such dichotomies are not limited to Israel, but the circumstances of Israel's creation have made them especially visible. At the same time, as can be seen in the essays collected here, there are signs of a blurring in the middle, of a less sharp dichotomy between "Jewish" and "Israeli." In the center, particularism and universality meet, and Israel finds that it can neither live in isolation nor cut itself off from its Jewish roots.

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

ISRAEL AS A FIELD OF STUDY

A Historical Overview

ILAN TROEN

THE study of Israel as a distinct field began to enter the university curriculum and academic scholarship around the last decade of the twentieth century. An important marker was the creation of the Association for Israel Studies (AIS) in 1985 by US-based academics who came from a variety of disciplines; they were the sole members of their departments interested in the subject. In 2017 the AIS listed about forty centers and chairs dedicated to Israel studies in Israel and forty outside Israel. However, this listing is already out of date. The list neglects about five centers in China, one in India, and another in Romania, as well as other programs developing in the Czech Republic, Poland, and other locations and in the United States and Canada.¹

The list of Israeli-based centers and chairs is similarly understated. Many Israeli scholars throughout the humanities and the social and political sciences, as well as law, security studies, and the like, naturally examine the society in which they live for at least a portion of their careers. At Ben-Gurion University alone I counted more than eighty scholars who devoted at least some attention to Israel. There are more than seventy universities and colleges in Israel and more than twenty Palestinian institutions in the West Bank and Gaza. They contribute an ever-growing body of knowledge and engage in a discourse that is vital and often critical. Much of this work, and that of colleagues abroad, is not identified as emerging from centers or chairs of Israel studies. Nevertheless, whether or not so identified, the literature concerning Israeli history, society, politics, and the place of the country in world affairs is undergoing enormous expansion.

When first formed in 1985 at a conference at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, the AIS had fewer than twenty scholars in attendance. By 1990 the AIS Research Directory listed ninety-seven scholars engaged in the field, with a balance between those situated in North America and those in Israel.² In 2017 the AIS had more than twenty-five hundred members on its mailing list, with four hundred to six hundred scholars attending

its annual conferences, which take place in either Israel or the United States. This includes a growing number of members particularly from Europe and Asia, with a strong presence of scholars from such distant and new venues as China, Japan, and India. Moreover, a European Association for Israel Studies has recently been formed, with several hundred members and perhaps 150 attendees at its annual conferences, who come from places ranging from Siberia to Iberia as well as Israel and North America.³

A further illustration of development in this field is reflected in the emergence of dedicated journals, notably *Israel Studies* (Indiana University Press, 1995–), *Israel Affairs* (Taylor and Francis, 1995–), *Israel Studies Review* (Berghahn, 2011–, previously *Israel Studies Forum*, 2001–2010 and *Israel Studies Bulletin*, 1992–2001), and *Journal of Israel History: Politics, Society, Culture* (Taylor and Francis; prior to 1994, *Studies in Zionism*). No less important, articles on Israel regularly find their way into the multitude of journals published by all sectors of the academy, from Middle East studies and Jewish studies to the traditional disciplines, from anthropology, law, and policy studies to sociology. *Israel Studies* alone registers more than six hundred individual scholars who have contributed at least one essay over nearly a quarter century of publication, and more than three thousand universities worldwide subscribe to it. Moreover, recognition of the field is found in its status as a “division” of established professional academic associations or in formal affiliation through the AIS. Such relationships exist with the Middle Eastern Studies Association, the Association for Jewish Studies, the American Historical Association, and the American Political Science Association.

These developments ultimately reflect the extraordinary expansion of actual courses in Israel studies in the United States alone. While there is no systematic collection of data from the thousands of universities and colleges across the country, one serious effort at tracking Israel-related courses in 316 top-ranked national and regional universities and liberal arts colleges between 2008 and 2013 counted 867 courses with about fifteen thousand students enrolled in them and an annual growth rate of 5 to 7 percent. Courses on the Arab-Israeli conflict were the most popular, but large numbers studied other subjects, and a relatively small group was enrolled in upper-level Hebrew courses that had significant content on society, politics, and culture (Koren & Fleisch, 2014). This manifestly increasing interest created the need to import Israeli academics, since the field was largely ignored in American graduate schools. The Brandeis Summer Institute for Israel Studies has also endeavored to meet this demand. Between 2004 and 2017 it hosted about three hundred academics from 250 universities across the world, although largely from the United States, for a one-month seminar designed to enhance the ability to introduce or enhance Israel-related courses. All participants must obtain written commitments from their institutions that their courses on Israel will be included in the curriculum.⁴

How can we explain this extraordinary growth? Much larger countries or regions do not enjoy such an efflorescence of global academic interest. One obvious reason is surely the widespread interest in the Arab-Israeli conflict in its many permutations, from a “clash of civilizations” to international relations, security issues, and conflict resolution. There is also much interest in Israel as a Jewish state and thereby a modern expression as

one of the world's oldest continuing civilizations with a significant impact on humankind, particularly but not only in the West. The recent and rapid spread of Israel studies in China reflects both aspects. Interest in the Middle East, a significant supplier of oil and other resources, is of significance to China, but so is the study of the West and particularly the monotheistic basis of its civilization. In both instances, there is an appreciation that now, as in the ancient world, something of significance is taking place between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Since perspectives and the organization of the curriculum vary, Israel studies may be identified with religious studies, particularly Jewish studies—itself a relatively new phenomenon in the academy—security issues, conflict resolution, and global studies. Israel is often also included in programs for Middle Eastern or Near Eastern studies in the West, or in West Asian studies in the region east of India and Indonesia. In sum, Israel is viewed through multiple prisms, a phenomenon that enhances opportunities for growth in Israel studies.

BACKGROUND TO THE GENESIS OF THE FIELD

Prior to the 1990s the study of Israel was often subsumed under Zionist or Jewish thought. It was a subject concerned with intentions, often by those who lived and wrote in Europe. However, the current focus on Israel goes well beyond intellectual history. It is overwhelmingly Zionism's praxis that commands contemporary interest (Troen, 2002).

A concern with Zionism as a lived experience naturally began among the first settlers shortly after their immigration to Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century. They wished and needed to understand themselves. Their story was a cause for celebration among supporters of Zionism and found expression in a wide variety of platforms, including popular historical accounts as well as individual and collective biographies.

Community studies written by settlers often took the form of anniversary or “jubilee” books (*sifrei yovel*). They emerged on the anniversary of the founding of a settlement, sometimes even after the fifth but certainly after the tenth, thirteenth, fifteenth, or twenty-fifth years, and so forth. Given that many hundreds of settlements were established beginning in the 1880s, this large and ever-growing literature constitutes a library in and of itself, replete with essential documentation. Typically these works began with a natural history of the locale and then moved on to human settlement in the ancient and modern worlds. These accounts were unbalanced in a variety of ways. Biblical accounts and other ancient documents provided welcome and even inspirational information, since they indicated the presence of ancient Hebrews, a datum celebrated by Zionist pioneers. With the decline of biblical or postbiblical sources, particularly rabbinical, and with the control of the country given over to a succession of non-Hebrew conquerors, resulting in the decline of the Jewish population, the narrative of the country became increasingly limited. With the return of a Jewish population toward the end of the

nineteenth century these volumes became increasingly replete with details devoted to pioneers and their lives, successes, and failures, particularly biographies of those who fell heroically in defense of the settlement. Thus these books became a repository of information celebrating the Jewish presence in the ancient past and in the present, with large lacunae for the many intervening centuries.

The production of such volumes was widespread and institutionalized. A magnificent collection of local histories (on six hundred communities), together with enormous primary material in the form of 400,000 newspaper clippings, is located at the Getzel Kressel Collection at Oxford. This archive covers only the years 1935–1980 and is an indication of the mass of documentation available in individual communities and in numerous archives and libraries.⁵

The passion for recording was widespread. A pervasive historical sensibility and a lively political society fragmented into numerous ideological camps encouraged recording events, often in a polemical mode. Thus many individuals kept diaries with, for example, the materials generated by David Ben-Gurion and leaders of other Zionist movements forming a central core of detailed introspection and public involvement.

As the wealth of documentation accumulated, numerous groups established dedicated archives and institutes to propagate narratives—often termed the *moresheth* or “heritage”—of particular groups. As Amos Oz famously said: “For most people Zionism has been fulfilled. I perceive Zionism as a family name. There are different ‘family names’—national Zionist, religious Zionists, secular Zionists and even Marxist Zionists. The common denominator was to create a homeland for the Jewish people and make it attractive to live here. This has been achieved.”⁶ Interest in what Zionism was attempting and the conflict within Palestine engaged a large public that consumed biographies, histories, articles, and visual materials, including films.

The development of biography as a prominent genre is revealing. Histories of individuals were initially written by journalists, popularizers, and an occasional academic, and there was even ghostwritten autobiography. Academic biography as an active genre is a relatively new phenomenon. Anita Shapira’s *Berl: The biography of a socialist Zionist* (1984), Jehuda Reinharz’s *Chaim Weizmann; The making of a Zionist leader* (1985), Yaacov Shavit’s *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement 1925–1948* (1988), Gabriel Sheffer’s *Moshe Sharett: Biography of a Political Moderate* (1996), and Pnina Lahav’s *Simon Agranat* (1997) are examples of a new trend that has taken hold. The recent Yale University Press series *Jewish Lives* reflects the popularity of this genre, with accessible studies by academics on Ben-Gurion, Scholem, Jabotinsky, Rav Kook, Dayan, and Bialik. This growing genre now extends to men and women in diverse fields, from generals to authors, religious and business leaders, and other citizens.⁷

The relatively late interest of academics in writing biography reveals a bias in the way the Zionist story has been told. In the mid-1980s I did a survey of doctoral dissertations under way at Israeli institutions and discovered that there were virtually no graduate students writing biography. The history of groups, not individuals, was celebrated. This was surprising for one familiar with American and British historiography, in which legions of students work on presidents and prime ministers as well as leading public

figures in politics, the arts, and industry. The emerging prominence of biography in Israel scholarship is an indication of how the study of Israel has become normalized.

Another trend is the growing appreciation for diverse sources. Under the influence of central European scholarship (more on this later), it was long assumed that “scientific” scholarship needed to be written from documents, preferably official ones located in archives. Since Israeli law requires that at least thirty years pass before government records are released, it was argued that postindependence history could only be written beginning in the 1980s at the earliest. As a consequence, historians in Israel largely ignored a host of issues germane to understanding their own society. In this vacuum, scholars in anthropology, sociology, geography, economics, and political science have made crucial contributions to a historical understanding of Israel and have greatly broadened the range of issues under investigation.

POLITICAL ROOTS OF ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP

Scientific research began well before the study of Israel entered the university. The systematic study of the country was undertaken by European explorers, usually backed by their governments. Much essential work was conducted by primarily British scholars, who operated through the Palestine Exploration Fund beginning in the latter half of the nineteenth century. They were concerned with two different perspectives. First, they wanted to reveal for contemporary visitors to the Holy Land glimpses into the world described in sacred texts. They also sought to provide modern maps for the country and to discover its resources, with the expectation that Palestine could be incorporated into the international capitalistic system. A fascinating synthesis of the then extant research drawn from ancient texts and modern research is included in the two-volume work published for fellow Labor Zionists in Yiddish in 1918, and written at the New York City Public Library by two young exiles from Palestine, David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, future prime minister and president of Israel, respectively (Ben-Gurion & Ben-Zvi, 1918). Their work reflected the growing need of Zionist authorities to plan systematically for Jewish settlement. Herzl’s 1902 *Altneuland* was a utopian novel rooted in technological, social, and political concepts. However, more accurate information was necessary for realizing Zionist visions. In effect, Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi provided an estimate of what would soon be known as the “economic absorptive capacity” of the country and thereby foreshadowed the main stimulus to scientific research that marked an enormous literature generated from the 1920s through the 1940s.

The growing Arab-Israeli conflict made such serious investigations necessary, with Arabs arguing that Jewish immigration needed to be restricted and Jews contending there was ample room for two peoples. This debate dominated the study of Palestine until the actual partition of the country as a result of the 1948 war rendered this issue

moot. However, in the course of this controversy scholars from such diverse disciplines as archaeology, geography, history, economics, agricultural development and resource management, and politics weighed in with evidence that argued the Arab or the Jewish case. Such work found its way directly or indirectly into the multitude of reports published by the British and the United Nations. Most of this research was conducted by scholars not resident in Palestine. For example, the need and desire for such research resulted in what was the largest avowedly nonpartisan project until that time, at a cost of \$100,000: Robert Nathan, Oscar Gass, and Daniel Creamer's (1946) two-volume study, *Palestine: Problem and Promise, an Economic Study*. The plethora of research led to Chaim Weizmann's observation in a December 1945 letter to President Truman that "Palestine, for its size, is probably the most investigated country in the world."⁸

Fact-based policy study had long-term consequences. It became the context and platform within which the social sciences entered the Israeli academy. The Hebrew University organized a social science faculty only after independence. Previously, research was conducted by Zionist authorities under the auspices of the World Zionist Organization, beginning with Arthur Ruppin, who held two German doctorates when he established the organization's Palestine Office in 1908.

His successor, Alfred Bonn  , was a German PhD in economics who was active in the Economic Research Institute of the Jewish Agency. Bonn   became Ruppin's successor and the founding dean of the Hebrew University's faculty of social sciences when it was established soon after Israeli independence. Beginning in the 1930s, the economist David Horowitz (founding governor of the Bank of Israel) and the sociologist S. N. Eisenstadt in particular produced numerous studies that illuminated the challenges facing Jewish settlement. While locally focused, they invoked comparative frameworks (Eisenstadt, 1973, 1992, 2000). This has become a mainstay of the Israel academy, whether done explicitly, such as comparing Israel with another specific country, or implicitly by adopting paradigms that derive from the experience of other societies and applying them to Israel.⁹

Bonn   placed the Zionist experience within a global context, notably Indian and Japanese development (Bonn  , 1943/1945). Eisenstadt's work is even broader. One capstone project examined major civilizations around the world, to which he related the Jewish experience in Palestine (Eisenstadt, 1992; Troen, 2014; Tiryakian, 2011). Such an explicitly comparative mode was also exemplified by his mentor, Martin Buber, who supervised Eisenstadt's Hebrew University MA dissertation. Buber, who held a chair in what was then defined as sociology rather than theology, wrote in his classic *Pathways in Utopia* a comparison of the relatively modest community of the kibbutz with the enormously larger Soviet, fascist, and Western social democratic models regnant in Europe and the West. Buber's summary celebrates the result: the kibbutz, unlike European societies, was "an experiment that did not fail" (Buber, 1950). This fascination with contemplating the relative failures of Europe was shared by Jacob Talmon, one of the giants of the humanities at the Hebrew University (Talmon, 1952, 1960, 1968).

Eisenstadt developed pioneering concepts that shaped the discourse of Israeli sociology, both celebrating the Zionist experience and finding fault with how good intentions went awry. In his own work and those of his students, who focused on numerous shortcomings

by Zionist authorities in developing the country, a base was established on which Israel studies would further develop. For example, his research seminars in the 1950s produced a cluster of anthropologists and sociologists who made a career of what was going wrong in rural settlements and development towns. The seminar's manifesto proposed to establish an Israeli sociology that was nonparochial, whose methods would be historical and comparative, and whose research would be judged by "universalistic" criteria—in particular the procedures of the established, mainly English-speaking sociological community. In practice this meant sociology as carried on in the United States. This was appropriate since the manifesto proposed to study Israeli immigration in the context of other immigrant societies, especially the United States. Moreover, many of the leaders of Israeli sociology, such as Louis Guttman and Elihu Katz, were American-educated immigrants. Others, such as Joseph Ben-David, split time between Israel and the University of Chicago and the University of California at Berkeley. Eisenstadt spent considerable periods at Harvard (Kimmerling, 1992; Troen, 2014).

The empathy for the challenge of immigration that was brought to this seminar was ignored or discounted by scholars, who since the 1980s have focused on the bias and myopia in earlier scholarship and who rebelled against Eisenstadt and the first generation as they used their own scholarship to advocate for social and political change (Dahan-Kalev, 2001; Shokeid, 2001). This was particularly pronounced as early as the beginning of the 1970s, when scholars such as Shlomo Swirsky (1981) and Sammy Smooha (1978) focused on the realities of the many inequalities in Israeli society, beginning with those across ethnic and class divides (see the chapters by Ram, Galnoor, and Smooha in this volume). In effect, such work resonated with the appearance of the Israeli version of the American Black Panthers and other movements that protested racial and class discrimination.

Scholars also came to focus on women and Israel's Arab population (see the chapters by Itzkevitch-Malka and Jamal in this volume). Indeed, the passionate scholarly interest in issues of equality would mark Israel studies through the present. The constant trope is that Zionist ideology aspired to create a democratic society, with some, including Buber, believing it had in part been achieved. For others the actual experience of Israel belied the reality of success. This dissonance between expectations and praxis has become a dominant motif among a very large number of scholars engaged in Israel studies. Indeed, calls for reform and protest across a wide spectrum in the past and the present form a defining motif across all the disciplines, ranging from expressions of disappointment and mere criticism to calls for disestablishment and reconstruction of the state and society (Dowty, 1999; Gavison, 1999; Ghanem, Rouhama, & Yiftachel, 1998; Smooha, 1997).¹⁰

While a concern for equality has been a product of European thought since the Enlightenment and French Revolution, it is likely that American scholarship played an important role in influencing how Israeli academics came to analyze their own society. How that happened may be explained by observing the changing influence of different foreign schools of thought on the Israeli academy. A small country with highly educated scholars who are deeply conversant with the discourse that takes place in the Western academy and want to place their own research within "universal" (actually Western)

scholarship, Israeli students are necessarily sensitive to and aware of how other societies examine themselves.

Israel is a small country, despite the possible illusion created by its prominence in the media and on the agenda of the United Nations. It does not have the size to sustain a totally independent scientific culture or academic community. It does not even have the population to justify extensive scientific publication in its national language, should that be deemed desirable. This has encouraged Israelis to choose affiliation with an international language and, concomitantly, with the main cultural and scientific communities of those who use that language.

It is unlikely that a small society that is both culturally and scientifically dependent will be able to sustain the variety of methodologies and disciplines characteristic of the modern university by generating a discrete body of knowledge based only on local experiences. But although science may be considered universal, one must necessarily draw on particular human experiences in building and testing social and cultural paradigms. If Israel was too small to provide the requisite data and generalizations, then Israeli scholars naturally had to look elsewhere.

As noted previously, the Central European university provided the overwhelming intellectual experience for Israeli academics until after independence. Nearly all of the professors prior to independence were graduates of German-language universities in Central Europe, although a number originated in Eastern Europe. A few outliers were trained in Italy, Great Britain, France, and Russia. Virtually no American-trained academics were found on the faculty. That would begin to change with remarkable speed after World War II, for several reasons. European-born or -trained professors did not want to return to Central Europe to continue their research because of the Holocaust and the destruction caused by the war. Soviet-dominated Europe was also shunned. Academics chose the United States, England, and France, in that order. The shift to the West was general and found expression in Israel's foreign policy. It was also true in personal connections. With European Jewry drastically diminished or isolated, the United States housed the largest Jewish community in the world and was readily accessible (Troen, 1994).

The consequences were both general and manifested in many specific areas of academic work. A recent study of the orientation and search for models of the good society among Knesset members who invoked foreign models for more than half a century after 1948 indicates a progressive shift from Great Britain in the first decade of independence to the United States (Troen, 2016). That shift occurred more quickly in some areas than in others, but it was general. It was dramatically manifested with the appointment in 1949 of an American-born, University of Chicago-trained economist, Don Patinkin, to lead economic research and training in the new state. He ultimately became university president. It should be remembered that his predecessors, Ruppin and Bonné, were German trained. With great speed a new generation of homegrown Israelis took their degrees at Chicago, MIT, Berkeley, Harvard, and similar institutions. In the 1950s the standard Hebrew textbook in economics used at the Hebrew University was the same that American students read in the original English: MIT's Paul Samuelson's *Economics* (first published in 1948; see the chapter by Shalev & Mandelkern in this volume).

What happened in economics happened in a host of other fields central to the study of Israel. Israeli scholars, for example, are heavily invested in survey research, which is another example of the “universalistic” approach advocated by Eisenstadt. Surveys are central to those interested particularly in the conflict and in Israeli politics but in other issues as well. Perhaps the leading institution reflecting this interest is the Israel Institute for Applied Social Research, later appropriately named the Guttman Center (and now incorporated into the Israel Democracy Institute). The founder, Louis Guttman, arrived in the country on the eve of the War of Independence but brought with him rich experience as the coauthor of the fourth volume of the *American Soldier: Measurement and Prediction*. This highly influential study, conducted by the US army during World War II, was the most extensive and influential project in this area and established a firm place for social psychology and attitude research as accepted applied analysis techniques. Guttman, with the support of Ben-Gurion, transferred the American concern in World War II with the morale of a citizen army to the nascent Israeli forces during the War of Independence. Guttman’s surveys then expanded into evaluating feelings toward institutions and postwar plans. After the war, research was extended progressively to a host of civilian issues, with the authorities seeking information on public attitudes toward immigration, Arabs, employment, and much more. With this survey base, a host of areas came under investigation in the academy, with a view to influencing policy. Together with Asher Arian, another American transplant, Guttman conducted the first studies of voter behavior just prior to the 1969 elections (Arian, 1972). This research has evolved into an active genre inside and outside the university, especially in studies about the Arab-Israeli conflict (see the chapter by Shapira & Rahat in this volume). Quantitative measurement, another legacy of Guttman, who was also a teacher of psychology, became an important part of Israeli psychological research. Quantitative research in general has become essential to students of Israeli society throughout the social and political sciences (Stone & Troen, 1995).

The look outward became institutionalized in the quest for membership in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and after acceptance in 2010. Through the institutionalized stream of reports that measure Israel’s economy, political behavior, and social characteristics, a host of scholars of Israel, inside and outside the country, participate in holding advanced, progressive, and democratic societies as the standard against which Israel must be compared.

The aspiration for an international context and audience has resulted in the publication of much of Israel studies in English. Understanding the literature, methodology, and paradigms as practiced outside Israel has become integral to the field. While this appreciation is also found in Hebrew-language journals, these are more dedicated to parochial issues for a local audience and consequently are less concerned with a relationship to international scholarship. Since promotion and professional recognition require international recognition, even in an area such as Hebrew literature, Israeli-based scholars must assimilate into the norms established abroad. This obviously is the norm for foreign specialists.

This process is abetted by the many opportunities for cross-fertilization. Israel is naturally the venue for much research. Foreign scholars inevitably need to work in Israel,

often in affiliation with Israeli institutions. Many are themselves transplanted Israelis. Moreover, it has become nearly inevitable for both foreign and Israeli scholars to receive doctoral or postdoctoral training as well as undertaking visiting or even permanent posts in a variety of Israeli or foreign institutions in the course of their careers. Considerable funding has become available, which encourages this mobility.¹¹

THE GLOBALIZATION OF ISRAEL STUDIES

While the focus until now has been on a bipolarity of Israel studies between Israel and the West, primarily the United States, the field has recently come to include other areas with spectacular growth over the last decade or so. Particularly noteworthy is the spread of Israel studies to Europe as well as to Asia, where, as noted previously, Israel is located in West Asian rather than Middle Eastern studies. This has resulted in a growing array of heretofore unexplored issues and new scholarship.

One obvious area is the relationship between Israel and the world that goes beyond Israel and the Jewish Diaspora or Israel and the American, British, or French relationship. European scholars from Germany eastward are writing on the relationship between their home countries and Israel from the earliest stages of the Zionist movement through the present. They have the enormous advantage of knowing the home language as well as at least English and usually Hebrew and often Arabic. It is a welcome phenomenon that young scholars, largely non-Jews, are fluent in Hebrew and often have traveled and studied in Israel. They also have access to local archives as well as ones in Israel and elsewhere for research. Moreover, they can enrich established topics such as the growth of Zionist movements in their home countries. Another rich topic is the role of the Holocaust in Europe and its aftermath in the establishment of Israel. Moreover, comparisons between social and political issues in these scholars' own societies and Israel attract attention. Similarly, comparisons between the way in which Israeli topics are dealt with in foreign countries and in Israel are illuminating. These topics are in addition to well-established issues within the ongoing concerns of the existing literature. All this makes for vital and fascinating subject matter for those scholars used to plying the usual bipolar routes of the field.¹²

In East Asia some aspects of the European experience are replicated. Particularly in universities in Delhi, there is a developing core of scholars interested in the relationship between India and Israel, as well as in Israeli politics. Subjects such as partition and relations between a non-Muslim majority and the Muslim minority are also in evidence. Similarly, Chinese scholars interrogate their country's relationship to the Middle East and Israel as well as issues in Israeli society and culture. Comparisons with Chinese society are not yet established, but the interest in Israel is far larger than in India, perhaps because of the extensive commercial relations between the two countries and the serious funding invested by the Chinese government in supporting the study of Israel. Philanthropists in Israel and the United States have come to support this effort. In both

India and China, interest in Israel is related to preparation for careers in commerce and international relations.¹³

The growth of the field in America is yielding new paths of significant research. A major reason is that many, if not most, of the students are not Jewish. Although courses may be given in relation to programs in Jewish studies, they take place or are cross-listed in other programs across the university. Indeed, were it otherwise the interest in Israel would not be large enough to support or justify the expanding place of Israel studies in the curriculum. With the exception of a very few institutions, Jews are a relatively small minority of students. Courses on Israel are now taught in many Christian, whether Protestant or Catholic, and Mormon institutions. Christians have their own interests in the Holy Land that derive from their own cultures and texts. At many institutions students are also Arab Muslims and Christians who come from the Middle East and hold highly politicized but often perceptive views of Israel. Many non-Jews come primed with preconceptions of the Arab-Israeli conflict and with great curiosity since the subject is usually optional as well as personal. In fact, Israel is presently taught in hundreds of courses in hundreds of universities, including public universities and those not affiliated with Judaism. Indeed, if the study of Israel were only a topic of interest for Jews, particularly outside Israel, it would not have enjoyed the acceptance and interest it has earned among scholars and students.

The result of the growth in the field is a plethora of new questions. With some exceptions, notably Bialer (2005) and Ariel (2013), there are few Israeli or Jewish scholars in a non-Jewish world who study the relationship between Christianity and the idea and reality of a contemporary Jewish state. While Islam is readily visible in the Jewish state, Christianity is largely absent. Thus the question of how Christians and believers in other faiths view the Jewish state and the relationship between their religions has opened new fields of inquiry. From across the wide range of Protestant denominations and Catholicism to Mormonism, dissertations are being written. While this is a fundamental concern or at least an item of natural curiosity to non-Jews, these scholars also bring more general and less ethnically related questions to the study of Israel.

Jews, too, are naturally important as contributors to scholarship and as an audience with their particularistic interests. Some are concerned with issues of the impact of Israel on Jewish life in the Diaspora. With the increasingly contentious place of Israel has among Diasporic Jews and in the societies in which they live, a significant debate has emerged among particularly Jewish historians and social scientists who attempt to measure the “distance” between Jews and the Jewish state (Beinart, 2013; Saxe & Chazan, 2008). Others are concerned with the political relationships between the two (Aridan 2017; Sasson, 2013). Still others focus on how the rulings of Israeli religious authorities affect the status of Diasporic Jewry (Waxman, 2016; see the chapter by Sucharov in this volume).

While little scholarship by Palestinian or other Arab scholars is found in the syllabi of most Israel studies courses, they are obviously prominent in courses taught in Palestinian studies. Nevertheless, significant change is beginning in the Arab world. For example, there are now also centers for the study of Israel in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.¹⁴

They may boldly include “Israel” in the titles of their programs, but more often Israel is taught within the rubric of Hebrew language acquisition. Arab scholars from the Middle East naturally view Israel from their own perspectives. Dissertations include comparative studies of Judaism and Islam in the establishment of states (Indonesia), Jewish views of Islam and Arab culture (Egypt and Saudi Arabia), and comparative issues such as military-civil relations in Turkey and Israel (Turkey). There is surely great potential in this development.

Ultimately, what is published outside Israel has enormous impact on how scholars inside the country address issues. Perhaps the most telling case is the impact of the revisionism that sprouted in the aftermath of the Lebanon War. The works of Benny Morris (1988), Avi Shlaim (1988), Ilan Pappé (1988), and Gershon Shafir (1989), for example, were first published in English in the United States and England. All these authors have deep roots in Israel and were educated in Israel as well as in American or British institutions. Some of their work has yet to be translated into Hebrew or became accessible to the Hebrew-speaking reader well after English publication. The phenomenon of publishing in a language other than the national one is yet another reflection of the globalization of Israel studies. It obviously points to an audience that exists well beyond the confines of the state. It also suggests that the models for analysis and criticism are necessarily familiar to non-Israelis. However, not all material is critical. The enormous argumentation that characterizes Israel studies, the cons as well as the pros, requires publication abroad to persuade both outsiders and insiders. It is even common for scholars of Israel, including those identified as pro-Israel, to publish in English prior to publishing in Hebrew, even when the author’s original text was formulated in Hebrew. A long list of such publications includes recent bestsellers by Anita Shapira (2012) and Ari Shavit (2013; see chapters by Barak and Sela in this volume).

This phenomenon indicates how far the field has come. The first studies of Zionist praxis were published in the language of the nineteenth-century settlers, with themselves and those who would follow as the intended audience. In the course of the ensuing decades, perhaps particularly as a consequence of wide interest in the remarkable achievements of the settlement project and in the controversy it caused, a literature of the Zionist experience grew at least in parallel with those concerns. With the undertaking of the subject by the academy, the literature about Zionism and Israel has become diverse and enriched by the methodologies and paradigms that are employed in the many and varied disciplines of the university. In effect, this *Handbook* is a reflection of both the growth and the differentiation that have taken place over the last generation or so. Moreover, this particular attempt, as comprehensive, as it is, is not the only one (Ben-Rafael, 2016). Less inclusive but far-ranging anthologies of particular issues and viewpoints abound as potential readers are sought who might be attracted by in-depth collections of the output of contemporary scholarship.

An appreciation for diversity is inherent in a new genre that has become characteristic of the field: parallel narratives (Adwan, Bar-On, & Naveh, 2012; Rotberg, 2006; Scham, Salem, & Poggrund, 2005). A widespread appreciation for the contentious nature of scholarship on Israel and the intense debates that characterize so many issues, particularly

but not only the Arab-Israeli conflict, has resulted in producing volumes that are designed to expose contrary views. Even as parallel lines never meet in nature, the possibility of producing a unified narrative of the Zionist experience that satisfies all or even many sides may not exist. Nevertheless, the exercise can produce empathy if not agreement. Appreciating that the study of Israel involves engaging on contested ground has encouraged at least some to ensure that, however powerfully they may argue for or prefer one side, alternative views will not be neglected. It is in this spirit that attractive courses are often designed. It is likely that as the field of Israel studies is carried forward by a new generation of scholars, it will continue to enjoy increasingly wide audiences, be open to insights generated by scholarly inquiry into the experience of other societies, and entertain new questions and issues. The field of Israel studies has come a long way in but a few decades, and future paths hold great promise for vital intellectual endeavor.

NOTES

1. See <http://reg.co.il/ais//ais/centers.ehtml>. The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University has published extensive reports as well as directories on the field since 2008. For a list of publications, see <https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/researchareas/israel-studies/campus.html>.
2. Lustick (n.d.).
3. <http://www.aisisraelstudies.org/ais/>; <http://www.israelstudies.eu/>.
4. See <http://www.brandeis.edu/israelcenter/SIIS/>.
5. See <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/muller/collections/kressel-archive>.
6. Oestermann (2006, p. 46). Other versions: "I have stated many times that Zionism is not a first name but a surname, a family name, and this family is divided, feuding over the question of a 'master plan' for the enterprise: How shall we live here? Shall we aspire to build the kingdom of David and Solomon? Shall we construct a Marxist paradise here? A Western society, a socialdemocratic welfare state? Or shall we create a model of the petit bourgeoisie diluted with a little yiddishkeit?" Amos Oz, cited in Oestermann (2006, p. 128). See Bresheeth (2014).
7. See <https://yalebooks.yale.edu/series/jewish-lives>.
8. Chaim Weizmann to Harry S. Truman, December 12, 1945, in *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* (1979, vol. 22, p. 78, ed. Joseph Heller, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University/Transaction Books).
9. There are numerous examples in many areas of Israel studies. Consider, for example, Lustick (1993); Yakobson and Rubinstein (2008); Sheffer (2003); and Barnett (1996).
10. This is an extensive and continuing debate. One important and classic source is the extended and interrelated discussions in *Israel Studies* by Smootha (1997), Ghanem, Rouhana, and Yiftachel (1998), Gavison (1999), and Dowty (1999).
11. A prime facilitator is the Israel Institute, founded in 2012, located in Washington, DC, and Tel-Aviv. See <https://www.schusterman.org/israel-institute>.
12. See the conferences of the European Association for Israel Studies, <http://www.israel-studies.eu/>.
13. A key Chinese-Israel program is sponsored by SIGNAL. See <http://en.sino-israel.org/>.

14. For an overview of Hebrew and Israel in Middle Eastern universities, see Kais (2017); and Abukhadra (2015) (see video of this lecture at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcb-RXnOKWo>). See a biography of Mostafa Hussein for an example of Arab scholars from the Middle East who have acquired their first knowledge of Israel in the homeland and graduate training in the United States and who now teach Israel studies at American universities, at <https://www.brandeis.edu/israelcenter/newsEvents/newsletter1Mostafa.html>.

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CHAPTER 2

A MINIMAL DEMOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF ISRAEL

SERGIO DELLAPERGOLA

This chapter surveys the demographic development of Israel/Palestine from antiquity through the present and looking toward the future.

TERRITORY AND HABITABILITY

The territory mostly designated in this chapter as Israel/Palestine has known different names, external boundaries, and internal partitions throughout history. Under the Ottoman Empire, namely during its later phases, the territory of Israel/Palestine did not constitute one recognizable administrative unit and was subdivided into provinces and districts administered respectively from Beirut, Damascus, Acre, and Jerusalem (see figure 2.1). Territorial partitions were mainly horizontal (east-west), but the Jordan River constituted a vertical (north-south) separation element.

An influential step in determining the modern and contemporary geographical boundaries of Israel/Palestine was the establishment of the British Mandate for Palestine—or more specifically Western Palestine—after World War I, hence a relatively recent geopolitical construct (see also United Kingdom, Palestine Royal Commission, 1937). During its twenty-six years, *de facto* from the end of World War I in 1918 and *de jure* from 1922 until May 14, 1948, the Mandate comprised a geographical area between the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the Jordan River to the east, with the Lebanese boundary to the north, and narrowing to a wedge ending on the short northern Red Sea coast of the Gulf of Aqaba in the south. The territory of Israel/Palestine thus defined amounts to approximately 28,000 km² (see Table 2.1), relatively small in international

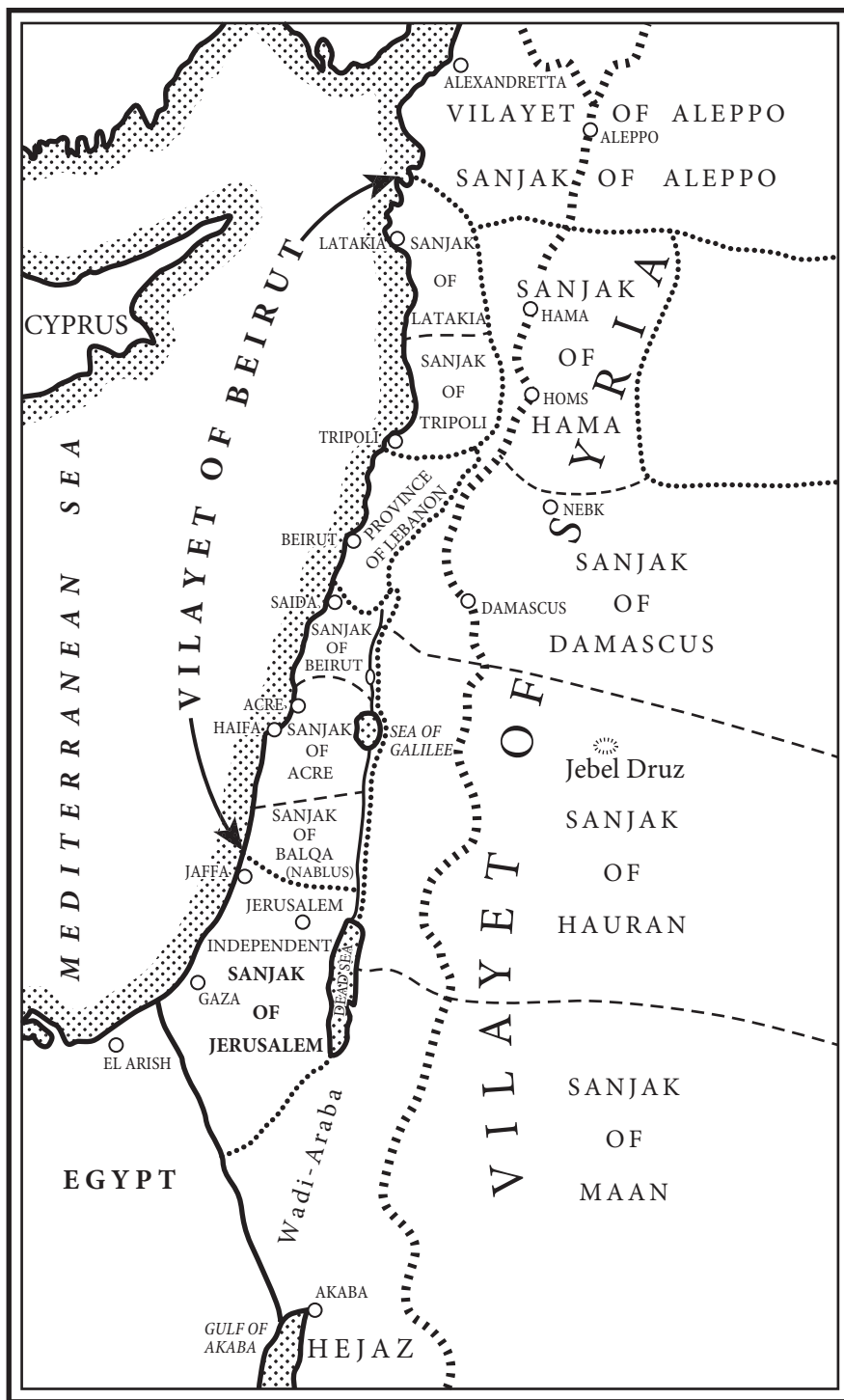


FIGURE 2.1 Territory of Israel/Palestine: The late Ottoman Empire.

Note: The vertical heavily dotted line in the middle is the railway.

Table 2.1 Territory of Israel/ Palestine, Total Surface

Surface	Total State of Israel ^a	West Bank	Gaza	Total Palestinian Territory	Grand total Israel/ Palestine
Km ²	22,072	5,506	378	5,884	27,956

^a Of which: 20,845 Israel within 1967 borders; 73 East Jerusalem; 1,154 Golan heights.
Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (annual publication).

comparison with contemporary sovereign states, and approximately the size of the US state of Maryland.

Despite its small size, this territory is characterized by significant variation in climatic conditions. The main climatic areas are to the west the Mediterranean, predominantly straight and sandy coastline, interrupted here and there by small cliffs; a hilly landscape in the north, with numerous wooded areas and good agricultural land, but also frequent karstic areas; a hilly central belt descending from north to south, surpassing in rare places one thousand meters of altitude; the Jordan valley to the east, forming the Lake of Tiberias and characterized by land depression descending to more than four hundred meters below sea level on the banks of the Dead Sea; and the southern half of Palestine, including the Negev desert, an arid and mountainous area comprising the majority of Palestine/Israel's total territory (nearly 13,000 km²). Scarce and irregular rainfall is distributed very differently over the territory. One main freshwater reserve is Tiberias Lake, from which in modern times an aqueduct carries drinking water south into the most densely populated central regions of Israel. Other water reserves are found under the hills of the central part of the country and along the coast. The quite precarious water resource balance greatly affects the availability and number of opportunities for agricultural exploitation, settlement, and population growth. This was and continues to be one of the key bones of contention in the debate and struggle about the settlement capability—or carrying capacity—of the whole area (Troen, 1989). Allocation of underground water reserves eventually became one of the most sensitive issues in the framework of Israeli-Palestinian disputes.

One crucial step in defining the territory of Israel/Palestine and its internal configuration was the approval by the United Nations General Assembly of Resolution 181 of November 29, 1947, on the partition of Mandatory Palestine. The plan subdivided the territory lying between the Mediterranean and the Jordan into seven parts, three of which were allocated to an Arab state and three to a Jewish state, with the area of Jerusalem and Bethlehem remaining under direct UN tutorship. Territory was allocated to the two proposed states in a chess-like pattern that considered the prevailing population distribution of Jews and Arabs over the whole territory (see figure 2.2). The UN partition plan was accepted by the Jewish leadership but was rejected by the Arab leadership.

With the proclamation on May 14, 1948, by David Ben Gurion of the independence of the proposed Jewish state under the name State of Israel, war soon erupted between the surrounding Arab powers and Israel. In the course of the conflict—named by the Israelis

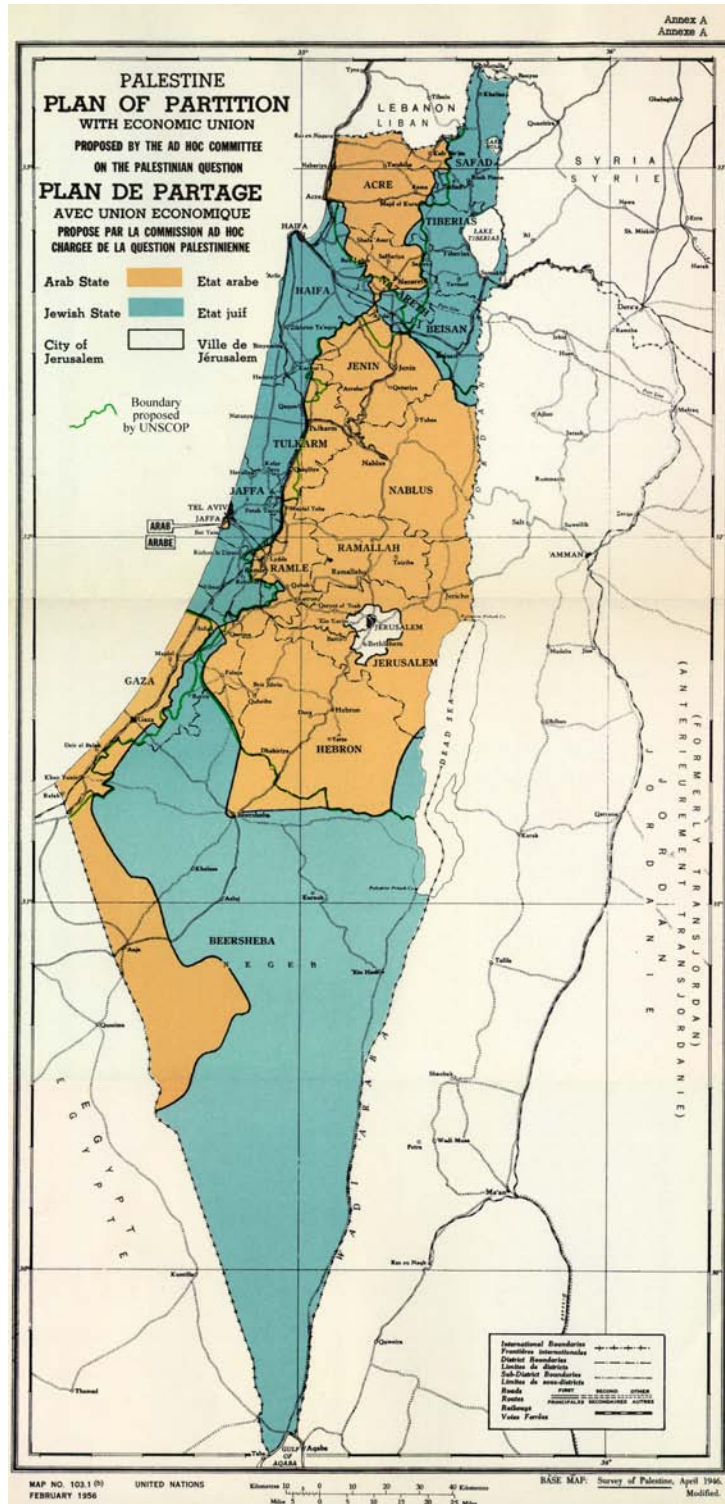


FIGURE 2.2 Territory of Israel/Palestine: The UN Partition Plan of November 29, 1947.

Source: United Nations (1946).

the War of Independence and by the Palestinians the *Nakhbah* (disaster) because of its consequences—Israel extended its rule over the whole northwestern area of the original partition plan (Western Galilee), over most of the southwestern area bordering Egypt, including the northern part of its coastal area, as well as over territory all around the central-eastern area of the country. Areas not incorporated into Israel included what came to be called the West Bank (of the Jordan River), with a surface area of 5,506 km², including the central part of the hilltop of Palestine and the eastern neighborhoods of Jerusalem. The West Bank includes areas north of Jerusalem historically defined in Jewish phraseology as Samaria and areas south of Jerusalem known as Judea. From 1948 to 1967 these territories were occupied and governed as part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan, subsequently redefined as the Kingdom of Jordan. The Gaza Strip, a short stretch of Mediterranean coast adjacent to the border with Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula covering 378 km², was subject to Egyptian military rule between 1948 and 1967.

With the June 1967 war—the Six-Day War—further significant changes in the territorial map occurred. Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and became the ruling power over the whole territory of the former British Mandate (see the chapter by Barak in this volume). Israel also occupied a northeastern territory of 1,154 km² on the heights of the Golan, which was part of Syria, and the whole Sinai Peninsula, which was part of Egypt and was later returned to Egypt following the 1979 peace treaty between the two countries. Immediately after the 1967 war, a surrounding area of 73 km² was incorporated into the Israeli Jerusalem municipality, which previously only included the Old City and its western neighborhoods. Such annexation concerned larger areas adjacent to the north, the east, and the south of the inhabited center—mostly Arab villages, only a small portion of which were built up. In 1980 Israel also formally extended its jurisdiction to the Golan Heights. Including these territorial additions, but not the West Bank and Gaza, the total area managed directly by the State of Israel became 22,072 km². Figure 2.3 shows the administrative division of Israel into six districts plus the unincorporated areas in the West Bank and Gaza. The Golan Heights appear as part of the northern district, and East Jerusalem as part of the Jerusalem district.

Beginning in 1968, Israel established a growing network of rural and urban settlements in the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and North Sinai. The latter were disbanded in 1982, those in the Gaza Strip and a few in Samaria in 2005.

LONG-TERM POPULATION CHANGE IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE

Throughout its long history, the total population of Israel/Palestine, mostly west of the Jordan River and regardless of the political and administrative divisions that periodically marked it, underwent significant quantitative fluctuations. A considerable amount of historical, archaeological, economic, and agricultural research, corroborated by textual

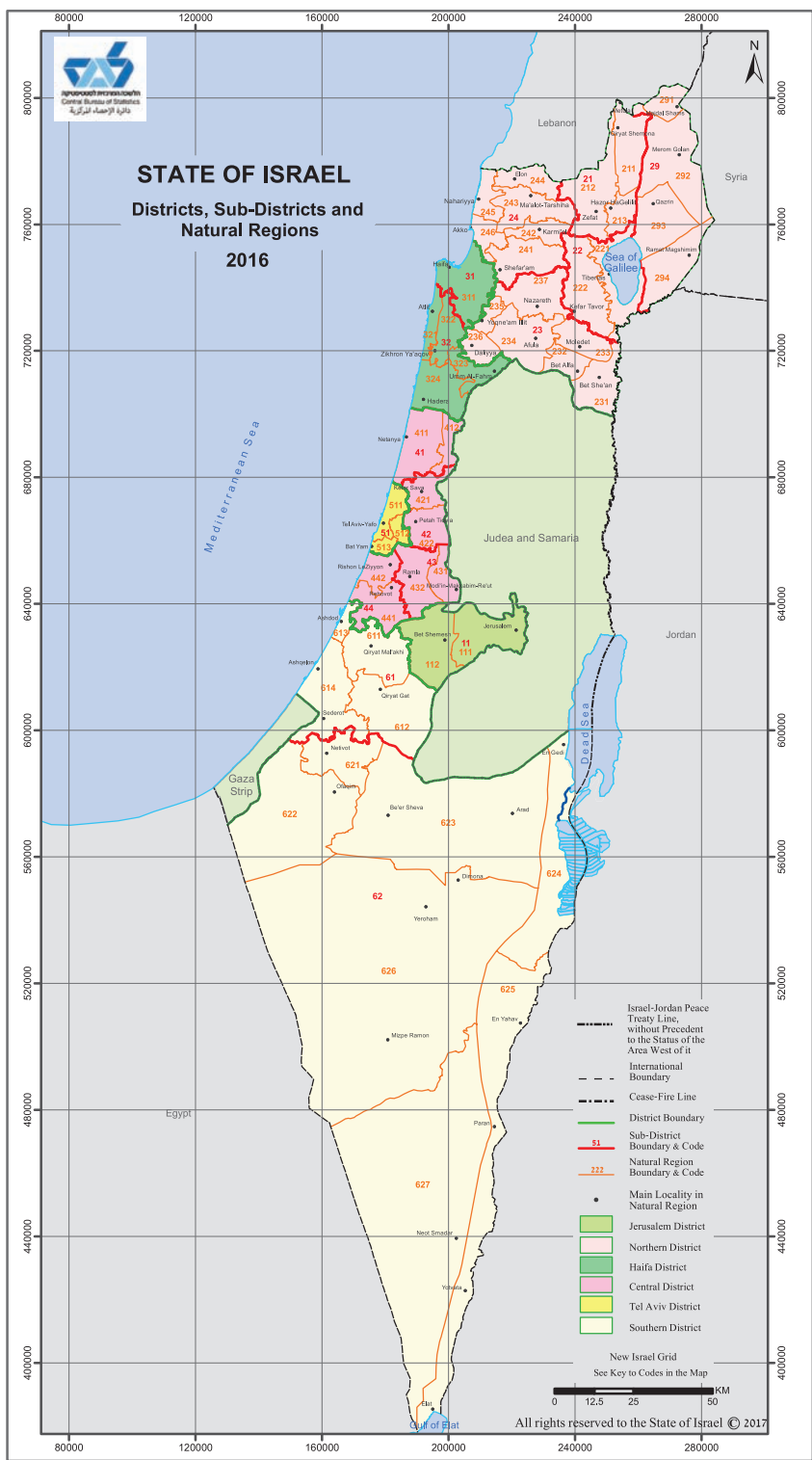


FIGURE 2.3 Territory of Israel/Palestine after the 1967 Six-Day War.

Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) (annual publication, 2018).

Table 2.2 Population of Israel/Palestine, by Main Religious Groups – 1st Century–2015 – Estimates, Thousands

Year	Jews	Christians	Muslims	Total ^a	% Jews
First half 1 st century C.e.	Majority	–	–	800–2,500	>50
4 th century	Minority	Majority	–	>1 st cent.	<50
End 12 th century	7	Minority	Majority	>225	<3.1
14 th cent. before Black death	(5)	Minority	Majority	225	(2.2)
14 th cent. after Black death	(3)	Minority	Majority	150	(2.0)
1533–39	5	6	145	157	3.2
1600	(15)	(10)	(200)	(225)	(6.7)
1690–91	2	11	219	232	0.9
1800	7	22	246	275	2.5
1890	43	57	432	532	8.1
1914	94	70	525	689	13.6
1922	84	71	589	752	11.2
1931	175	89	760	1,033	16.9
1947	630	143	1,181	1,970	32.0
1950	1,203	72	910	2,200	54.7
1960	1,911	85	1,090	3,111	61.4
1967	2,374	102	1,204	3,716	63.9
1975	2,979	116	1,447	4,568	65.2
1985	3,517	149	2,166	5,908	59.5
1995	4,522	191	3,241	8,112	55.7
2005	5,234	235	4,338	10,263	51.0
2015	6,336	275	5,492	12,663	50.0

^a Includes others: Druse, other small religious minorities, and since 1990, immigrants and children of immigrants (mostly from the former USSR) lacking religious status.

Sources: until 1947: Bachi (1977); after 1947: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (annual publication); PCBS (2018); and author's estimates.

and exegetic materials, allows for a rather detailed reconstruction of regional population history, keeping in mind the tentative character of many of the estimates (see table 2.2). Numbers rose and fell, sometimes dramatically (Bachi, 1977; McEvedy & Jones, 1978; Broshi, 2001; Botticini & Eckstein, 2012). Population composition by major religions changed considerably and repeatedly, resulting in major transformations in the physical, economic, and cultural character of the region. Never, however, was Israel/Palestine a homogeneous region in terms of religious beliefs and ethnic backgrounds.

In pre-Christian antiquity, the population of Israel/Palestine was relatively small. Upward development to an apogee at the time of consolidation of the kingdom under the rule of David and Solomon occurred around the tenth century BC. Following the fall of the Kingdom of Israel in the eighth century BC and of the Kingdom of Judea in the sixth century BC, deportations and exile of many residents and the end of Jewish political autonomy centered on the sanctuary in Jerusalem entailed further population decline. Jewish population growth and political influence re-emerged in a highly Hellenized

society in Israel/Palestine during the two centuries before the Christian era. In the first century CE, the population of Israel/Palestine had recovered and possibly exceeded its previous highest levels. More sanguine researchers estimate 2.5 million inhabitants in the 1st century CE, while the more cautious and possibly more reliable prefer a lower figure of about 800,000.

After the fifth century, the population in Israel/Palestine decreased considerably concurrently with population decreases in all regions around the Mediterranean shores. The collapse of the Western Roman Empire, economic and political decline, and widespread epidemics explain this sharp demographic decline. From the seventh century onward the rise and expansion of Islamic influence generated a further substitution in cultural and religious hegemony. For over thirteen hundred years Israel/Palestine became a predominantly Muslim land, though with the constant and uninterrupted presence of small Jewish and Christian minorities. Population estimates fluctuated between 150,000 and 250,000. Small immigration fluxes, namely after the expulsion of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula and its domains in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, moderately contributed to sustaining the diminutive Jewish population (Lewis, 1952).

During the nineteenth century, minor yet qualitatively significant Jewish immigration came from Europe, North Africa, Yemen, and other Middle Eastern countries (Ben Ya'akov, 2002). Israel/Palestine's demography changed in the second half of the nineteenth century with the arrival of the early currents of modern Jewish immigration. Between 1800 and 1890 the Jewish population grew from 7,000 to 43,000 through repeated small waves of immigrants—modest numbers in absolute terms but a more than six fold increase. Over the same years the Christian population more than doubled, from 22,000 to 57,000. The predominant Muslim population grew from 246,000 to 432,000, an increase of 76 percent. With the passage from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, not only did population size begin to grow more significantly, but its rate of growth also accelerated rapidly. The Jewish population increased more rapidly through several immigration waves in spite of contradictory British policies that alternated between permissive or even encouraging periods and periods of stringent regulations or the virtual stoppage of immigration permits with the 1939 MacDonald White Paper (Friedlander & Goldscheider, 1979; United Kingdom, 1939). Between 1922 and 1948 the total population grew from 752,000 to 1,970,000, and the Jewish population grew from 64,000 to 630,000 (11 to 32 percent). Over the whole territory of Israel/Palestine west of the Jordan, it took forty-one years to double the population to one million in 1931, sixteen years to reach two million in 1947, less than twenty-eight years to exceed four and one-half million 1975, and less than twenty-five years to exceed nine million in 2000. In 2017 the total population, including Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, surpassed thirteen million, or forty-seven times more than in 1800. Over the seventy years between 1947, the year of the UN's partition plan, and 2017, Israel/Palestine's total population grew by more than 6.5 times. Conflict continued to unfold under conditions of rapid population expansion, contrary to other conflict areas, where population significantly diminished.

Percent-wise, the Jewish presence in Israel/Palestine varied from an absolute majority in antiquity to a tiny minority, an estimated minimum of less than 1 percent at the end of

the seventeenth century in a predominantly Moslem population; it then gradually recovered to about 10 percent at the end of the nineteenth century and one-third of the total in 1947. In Jerusalem, Jews consistently constituted the larger group and a plurality of the city's total population (Ben Arie, 1984; Schmelz, 1987). A Jewish majority over the whole territory of Israel/Palestine re-emerged around 1950 following the major immigration wave after the declaration of the independence of the State of Israel.

CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN POPULATION

In 1947, at the time of the UN partition plan, the total population of Israel/Palestine was estimated at around 2 million. About 1.2 million (60 percent) were Muslims, about 650,000 (32 percent) were Jews, and about 150,000 (7 percent) were Christians. The 1948–1949 war and the resulting geopolitical changes determined a dramatic overturn in the extant demographic and sociocultural balance. One heavy and most dramatic factor was the exodus of Palestinian Arabs, 625,000 to 675,000 according to Israeli sources (Bachi, 1977, pp. 401–402), or 700,000 to 750,000 according to various Palestinian sources (Hagopian & Zahlan, 1974; Kossaifi, 1996; PCBS, 2017). These migrants, together with their descendants, formed the main nucleus of the Palestinian refugee population (see discussion later in this chapter). Here we cannot delve into the continuing controversy over the causes and circumstances of the great Arab exodus of 1948 (Morris, 2004). For the most part, Palestinians argue that they fled because of forced exhortation by Israeli military forces during the fighting and the killing of Arab civilians. Israelis argue that it was a largely voluntary flight from facing the Israeli military but mostly prompted by an Arab leadership that did not want the civilian population to interfere on the battlefield in what was meant to be a total elimination of the Jewish settlement. The fact is that many Arabs left their homes in the Israeli-ruled areas, and others who had properties in those areas lost access to their sources of economic subsistence. Following the great exodus, the majority of refugees who abandoned the areas under Israeli rule moved to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, while some passed into neighboring countries, including Transjordan, Syria, and Lebanon, and some went to more distant countries.

Immediately following Israel's independence, from 1948 to 1951, a crucial factor of demographic transformation was the opening up of the country to a massive wave of Jewish immigration. Many of the immigrants were refugees or persons in conditions of extreme health and economic deprivation. About half of these new immigrants were survivors of anti-Jewish persecution and extermination by the Nazi fascist regimes, most of whom had been temporarily sheltered in displaced persons centers in Europe. The other half came from Middle Eastern countries such as Yemen, Iraq, and Turkey, or North African countries such as Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, where the economic and security conditions of local Jewish communities collapsed surrounded by the hostility

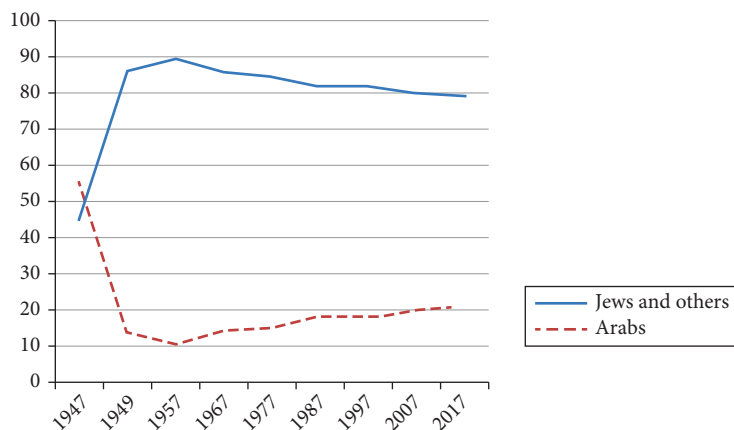


FIGURE 2.4 Percent of Jews and Arabs in the State of Israel, 1947–2017.

Source: Data from Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. Author's processing.

of the Muslim majority. Israel/Palestine therefore witnessed within a few years an epic and in many ways tragic double exodus, in which actors from both sides of the conflict lost homes, property, and means of subsistence, and not less significantly, their primary social, environmental, and affective frameworks (see the chapter by Willen and Zawdu in this volume).

In the midst of these events, and all over a territory of Israel/Palestine now divided into three political trunks among the State of Israel, Egypt, and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, for the first time in modern times a Jewish majority emerged among the total population. Continuing significant migrations in and out of the country affected each of the major ethno-religious population groups. Differential natural increase also greatly contributed to modifying the total size and composition of the Israel/Palestine population. Figure 2.4 illustrates the changing proportion of Jews within the total population of the State of Israel between 1947 and 2017, excluding the Palestinian population (but including Jews) in the West Bank and Gaza. A peak of about 90 percent Jewish population was attained toward the end of the 1950s following large-scale Jewish immigration. Subsequently, persisting high birth rates and declining death rates contributed to higher rates of natural increase among the Arab population, whose share of Israel's total population increased all the time in spite of continuing Jewish immigration. Particularly noteworthy is the marginal influence of the large immigration wave of the early 1990s in modifying this trend.

The unfolding of Jewish immigration to Israel is illustrated in figure 2.5. The prominent wavelike pattern that characterized immigration to Israel during the whole period of statehood continued a trend that had prevailed during the nineteenth century and before, with much smaller numbers, and more substantially during the first half of the twentieth century (Metzer, 1998; DellaPergola, 2009a). Mass immigration to Israel peaked in 1949 and continued through 1951, followed by continuing ups and downs at somewhat lower levels. Underlying each immigration wave lay political and economic

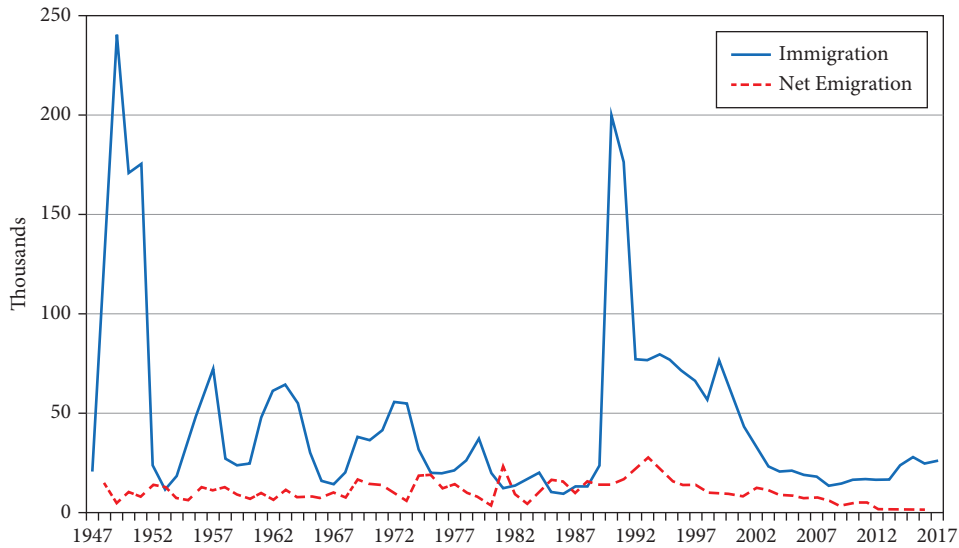


FIGURE 2.5 Immigration to and emigration from Israel, 1947–2017.

Source: Data from Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. Author's processing.

circumstances in different countries of origin—mostly in North Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe—that suddenly worsened the status and security of Jewish communities. Another crucial factor was the possibility of leaving the respective countries, which in many cases was precluded by local national policies. The most prominent case in point is that of the former Soviet Union (FSU), where only after the 1967 war was a real opportunity for Jewish emigration reinstated after decades of closed frontiers. FSU immigration became prominent in the 1970s, diminished greatly in the 1980s, reached its absolute peak in 1990 and 1991 after the fall of the Berlin wall, and continued thereafter with less intensity.

The profile of emigration from Israel was entirely different. Data in figure 2.5 should be interpreted as the net annual increase in the total pool of Israeli residents who left for more than one year without returning to Israel and permanently live abroad. Some of these died in the meantime. No major emigration crisis is outlined by the figures, rather a continuous and quick response to Israel's changing economic situation, namely employment, income, foreign investment, and price stability. Emigration is enhanced by temporary negative conjunctures. Variable security conditions in the country and cultural and identification perceptions may also have played a secondary role in emigration from Israel. Absolute numbers of emigrants did not change much over time, but the pool of inhabitants increased tenfold during the first seventy years of statehood; therefore the relative incidence of emigration declined accordingly. It should be noted in this respect that Israel's economic and social development greatly improved after independence. In spite of rapid population increase and the absorption of over 3.2 million immigrants, mostly from less-developed countries, Israel's standard of living constantly rose. In 2016 Israel was ranked nineteenth of 190 countries according to the Human Development

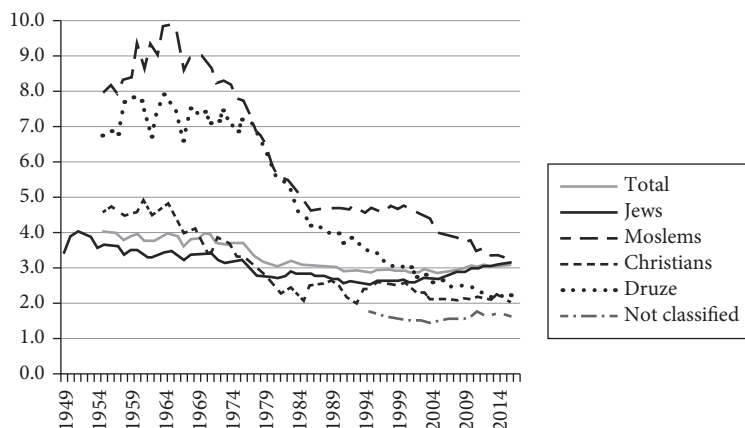


FIGURE 2.6 Total fertility rates^a in Israel by major religious groups, 1949–2016.

^a Measurement unit is children born per woman regardless of marital status

Source: Data from Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. Author's processing.

Index (HDI), a combined measure of health, education, and income (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). Migrations to and from Israel are significantly congruent with Israel's position on the global socioeconomic scene.

The other main factor of population change in Israel was its natural increase. Figure 2.6 shows the changing levels of fertility in Israel by major religious groups. Total fertility levels in Israel were exceptionally stable, and by the first decades of the twenty-first century they were by far the highest among developed countries, at a level of more than three children on average per woman (DellaPergola, 2009b). Until the 1980s, large differences prevailed between the very high levels of Muslims and the Druze and those of Jews and Christians. More recently the gaps have narrowed through a significant convergence of family formation patterns. Life expectancy grew constantly across all population groups. However, because of persisting differences between the respective age compositions, in particular between Muslims and Jews, the former continue to have significantly higher birth rates, lower death rates, and higher rates of natural increase. Fertility gaps also diminished or disappeared among different geographical origin groups within the Jewish population. What instead remained highly visible among Jews was the fertility gap across the religiosity gradient. Haredi families could have six to seven children versus two to three among the secular or the moderately traditional. The latter, however, significantly exceeded the typical family size in contemporary developed societies, demonstrating a persistently diffused and strong demand for children in Israeli society, namely among higher socioeconomic strata (DellaPergola, 2015).

By 2017 the total population of Israel/Palestine, from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River, inclusive of the Golan Heights, was estimated at about 13.2 million (see table 2.3). About 6.5 million were Jews, with about 400,000 additional members of Jewish families lacking religious affiliation, for a combined total of 52 percent of the total population.

Table 2.3 Core and Enlarged Jewish Population, Arab Population, Foreign Workers and Refugees in Israel and Palestinian Territory by Territorial Divisions, 1/1/2017^a

Area	Core Jewish Population	Others	Core Jewish and others ^b	Arab population and others	Foreign workers, undocu-mented, refugees ^c	Total	Percent of Jews and others ^d
Grand total	6,451,000	384,500	6,835,500	6,088,200	233,800	13,157,500	52.0
<i>State of Israel^e</i>	<i>6,451,000</i>	<i>384,500</i>	<i>6,835,500</i>	<i>1,796,400</i>	<i>233,800</i>	<i>8,865,700</i>	<i>77.1</i>
<i>Thereof:</i>							
Pre-1967 borders	5,821,000	366,400	6,187,400	1,439,100	233,800	7,860,300	78.7
East Jerusalem ^f	215,200	8,100	223,300	332,000	-	555,300	40.2
Golan Heights	21,500	1,600	23,100	25,300	-	48,400	47.7
West Bank	393,300	8,400	401,700	^g	-	401,700	13.8 ^h
<i>Palestinian Territory</i>				<i>4,291,800</i>		<i>4,291,800</i>	<i>-</i>
West Bank	ⁱ	ⁱ	ⁱ	2,502,700	-	2,502,700	[13.8] ^h
Gaza	0	0	0	1,789,100	-	1,789,100	0.0

^a Rounded figures^b Enlarged Jewish population^c All foreign workers, undocumented residents and refugees were allocated to Israel within pre-1967 borders. Source: Israel Population and Migration Authority (2016)^d Core Jewish divided by Total population^e As defined by Israel's legal system^f Estimated from Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research (2017)^g Included under Palestinian Territory^h Percent of Jews and others out of total population in the West Bank under Israeli or Palestinian Authority jurisdictionⁱ Included under State of Israel

Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics; Israel Population and Migration Authority; PCBS (2018); DellaPergola (2017)

Arabs comprised 1.8 million residents of the State of Israel, and 4.3 million residents in the Palestinian Territories, for a total of 6.1 million (46.3 percent). There also were over 200,000 foreign workers, undocumented tourists, and refugees, mostly from Africa (1.7 percent). In 2017 the total legal population of the state of Israel—including 223,300 Jews and 332,000 Arabs in the eastern parts of Jerusalem (Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, 2017), and 401,700 Jewish residents in the West Bank and the Golan Heights—was 8,631,900. Of the total Arab population of the Palestinian Territories of 4.3 million, about 2.5 million lived in the West Bank and 1.8 million in the Gaza Strip. Jews represented about 79 percent of the population within the boundaries preceding the 1967 war, 48 percent in the Golan, 40 percent in East Jerusalem neighborhoods, and 14 percent in the West Bank.

Table 2.4 Jewish Population in Israel /Palestine Territories Outside Israel's 1967 Borders,* 1968–2017

Year	Population
1968	A few
1973	3,400
1977	10,900
1987	69,700
1997	174,500
2007	293,400
2017	424,800

Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (annual publication, various years). * Includes West Bank, Gaza, and Golan Heights. East Jerusalem not included in these data.

After the Six-Day War an intense process of Jewish settlement began in the territories occupied other than East Jerusalem, which was annexed in July 1967: the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and for a few years between the late 1960s and the early 1980s, Northern Sinai (see table 2.4). The Jewish population in these areas started from a few individuals in 1968, passed the 10,000 mark in 1977, and grew rapidly to 174,500 in 1997 and to 424,800 in 2017, including non-Jewish relatives. A large part of this increase was due to internal migration from other areas in Israel, but natural increase was also a significant factor because of the generally young and motivated settling population.

Regarding the Palestinian population, following the 1993 Oslo Accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the political-territorial reality of Israel/Palestine comprised five possible situations: (1) the State of Israel, wherein sovereignty and the judiciary belong entirely to the state, and the minorities of Palestinian Arabs formally hold civil rights just as any other residents, with a distinction between the vast majority with Israeli citizenship and those without, mostly residents of East Jerusalem; (2) area A of the West Bank, with administrative and security control fully in the hands of the Palestinian Authority; (3) area B of the West Bank, including some Israeli settlements, with the Palestinian Authority exercising administrative responsibility and Israeli military authorities overseeing security; (4) area C of the West Bank, with local power fully exercised by the Israeli authorities; and (5) the Gaza area, where after the Israeli withdrawal of military troops and all civilian settlements in August 2005, local autonomy was entirely managed by the Palestinian Authority. After the 2006 elections, power was mostly in the hands of a local government led by the Hamas movement.

All areas under Israeli rule since 1967 became known as the occupied territories, but in the light of the previously mentioned developments and administrative distinctions, this label is not entirely accurate. In contemporary phraseology, the concept of occupied territories has become synonymous with Palestine in the context of the conflict with

Israel. The West Bank Palestinian population around 2000 was geographically split between about 64 percent of residents in area A, 33 percent in area B, and 3 percent in area C (Fargues, 2000). Areas B and C could be considered occupied Palestinian territories, with an Israeli civilian and predominant military presence. Area A, and since 2005 the Gaza area, where the vast majority of the Palestinian population resides, would be better described as Palestinian autonomous territories. Following the recrudescence of hostilities with the second intifada, the Israeli Defense Forces intervened in all areas, and these distinctions were partially blurred.

Throughout the twentieth century, demographic processes were strongly intertwined with highly delicate political issues related to the conflict, to territorial sovereignty, and to the nature of national identity among the extant population. Both parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict were aware of the power of numbers and made efforts to enhance their respective strength. Leaders and executives in Israel conceived policies supportive of population growth, such as encouraging immigration through the Law of Return or developing provisions aimed at sustaining the family (Gavison, 2009; DellaPergola, 2011). These efforts did help to attain relatively high growth rates, but in no circumstance could policies alone achieve results that were not compatible with the will of the people and the general modernization of Israeli society.

JEWS AND PALESTINIANS: HOMELANDS AND DIASPORAS

One further significant demographic aspect of Israel/Palestine is the mutual relationship between the local population and a much wider circle of people residing elsewhere and tied to some extent to this local nucleus. Under current conditions, diasporas are more a virtual than a real potential source of immigration, hence of possible future population growth in Israel/Palestine. Over eight million Jews and nearly six million Palestinians now live outside of Israel/Palestine. Besides the opportunities for returning to their respective homelands, the Jewish and Palestinian Diasporas have played and continue to play an important role in the respective population histories and represent a possible factor in mobilizing public support, political lobbying, and economic resources within their respective communities. Diasporas may also help homelands facing the international community, such as governments in different countries, mass media, the United Nations, or nongovernmental organizations (see chapters by Sela and Sucharov in this volume).

All diasporas derive from earlier migrations; constitute minorities; and must face perennial issues of identification, belonging, and interaction with the surrounding majority. Therefore to some extent they are comparable (Sheffer, 2003). The question “Who is a Jew?” has been the subject of endless discussions, investigations, and disputes (Ben Rafael, 2002). The echoing question “Who is a Palestinian?” is no less complex.

After 1948 modalities of growth of the Jewish and Palestinian diasporas were in some respects parallel and in some others opposed. Mass migration from the Jewish Diaspora to Israel was matched by a massive Arab population movement out of Palestine. These geographical currents significantly affected the demographic balance between the two parties. In actual experience, Jewish immigration and its absorption implied a considerable amount of cultural and social class dislocation and cleavage, the accumulation of social gaps, and occasionally their exploitation for political goals. These major obstacles notwithstanding, a significant convergence model emerged between different immigrants groups (DellaPergola, 2007). More recently the distinction was suggested among a *core* Jewish population inclusive of all Jews, an *enlarged* Jewish population including all other non-Jewish members of households, and a *Law of Return* population including all descendants of Jews down to the third generation and their respective spouses—whether Jewish or not (DellaPergola, 2014).

The migratory experience of Palestinians and their relationship with their respective diaspora was quite the reverse. The Palestinian Diaspora was largely determined by the events of the war of 1948, and to a much lesser degree by those of the 1967 war. Just as Zionist ideology focuses on the return of Jews to their ancient motherland, so one of the two central pillars of Palestinian identity is the right to return of refugees and their descendants. The second pillar is the end of Israeli occupation of the territories. Therefore, the question of who is a Palestinian refugee holds overburdened political valence and requires careful consideration.

According to the UN Refugee, Rescue and Work Agency (UNRWA), a Palestinian refugee is “anyone who lived in Palestine two years before the 1948 war and emigrated to one of the areas where UNRWA operates (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank, and Gaza).” According to the Palestinian National Convention, Palestinian refugees are “Arab citizens who lived in Palestine until 1947, whether expelled from Palestine or remained in Palestine.” The definition also includes all their descendants born of an Arab father inside or outside Palestine after that date (PCBS, 2017). According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “updating of UNRWA data depends on the refugees” (PCBS, 2017). UNRWA refugee facilities, however, host a growing number of non-Palestinian needy persons, as demonstrated by the recent surge in the number of people treated at UNRWA Syrian facilities (UNRWA, 2016). On the other hand, a population census in Lebanon in 2017 found significantly lower numbers of Palestinians than reported by UNRWA (*Fox News*, 2017). Part of the difference may be that migration to Western countries is still not sufficiently documented by other sources. Data on refugees and on Palestinians worldwide therefore tend to provide estimates of very unequal reliability. Doubts exist concerning the procedures for registration of vital events among the refugee population—particularly deaths, as many of the UNRWA benefits related to refugee status would be lost in case of death. Moreover, when a refugee marries a nonrefugee, assessing the benefits linked to one or the other situation and the ability to transfer them to spouses and offspring can determine a preference for refugee status.

Table 2.5 World Jewish and Palestinian Populations, by Countries of Residence – Estimates and Percentages, 1948–2017

Region	Jews ^a				Palestinians ^b			
	N. (thousands)		Percent		N. (thousands)		Percent	
	1948 ^c	2017 ^d	1948 ^c	2017 ^d	1948 ^c	2017 ^d	1948 ^c	2017 ^d
Annual growth rate	0.38%				2.90%			
Total world	11,185	14,511	100.0	100.0	1,714	12,349	100.0	100.0
Israel/Palestine, total	650	6,451	5.8	44.4	1,454^b	6,063	84.8	49.1
Israel (excl. East Jerusalem)	645	5,821	5.6	40.1	856 ^c	1,439	49.9	11.7
West Bank (incl. East Jerusalem)	5	630	0.2	4.3	598 ^f	4,624	34.9	37.4
Middle East^g, North Africa	945	27	8.5	0.2	160^h	5,590	9.3	45.3
Other countries	9,590	8,033	85.7	55.4	100^h	696	5.8	5.6

^a. Core Jewish population. Sources: Bachi (1977); DellaPergola (2017).

^b. Source: PCBS (2006, 2017). Author's adjusted considering external migrations.

^c. 15 May.

^d. 31 December.

^e. Based on an average estimate of 700,000 displaced Palestinians from areas that became the State of Israel.

^f. Difference between the two preceding rows.

^g. Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Gulf Emirates, Iran, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and other Arab countries.

^h. Author's estimate.

A fundamental difference between the case of Jewish immigrants in Israel and that of Palestinian refugees in Palestine and other countries is the great efforts invested in Israel to incorporate immigrants into the normative societal body. In the case of Palestinians, great efforts were made to prevent their absorption into the surrounding societies, and the practice was to subordinate immediate individual interests to a final settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Keeping in mind these various caveats, table 2.5 tentatively reconstructs the size and geographical distribution on the eve of the 1948 war and in 2017 of the world Jewish population (DellaPergola, 2017; DellaPergola, Rebhun, & Tolts, 2000) and of the world Palestinian population (Abu Libdeh, 1999; PASSIA, 1998; PCBS, 1999, PCBS, 2017; UNRWA, 2000, 2016).

In 1948 the world's Jewish population was estimated at about 11.2 million, of which 650,000 (6 percent) lived in Palestine, 945,000 (8 percent) in the Middle East and North Africa countries, and the rest (86 percent) in Western and Eastern Europe. Israel's independence and subsequent mass immigration, as well as the balance of natural increase and Jewish identity, had impressive consequences on world Jewish population distribution. The total number of Jews increased somewhat after World War II, and after a period of close to zero growth between the 1970s and the 1990s, it rose again, to an estimated 14.5 million in 2017, an average annual growth rate of less than 0.4 percent since

1948. Of this total, 6.5 million (44.4 percent) lived in Israel; only 27,000 remained in Muslim countries (0.2 percent); and the majority, over 8 million (55.4 percent), lived mostly in the United States, with secondary concentrations in other Western countries and a residual core of about 250,000 in the FSU (DellaPergola, 2017).

Almost all Palestinian Arabs lived in Palestine on the eve of the 1948 *de facto* partition, although migrant communities had already settled in the Middle East, America, and several other Western countries. The total Palestinian population can be estimated at about 1.7 million in 1948, and its high growth rate of nearly 3 percent per year brought it to over 12.3 million people in 2017. Rapid growth reflects high birth rates and rapid declines in mortality, especially thanks to Israel's advanced health system, but probably also rules that are not always clear and rigorous in the attribution of Palestinian identity. The 1948 exodus radically altered the global geography of Palestinians. In 1949, some 156,000 remained in the territory of the State of Israel. Our estimates account for an intermediate value of 700,000 refugees, probably higher than the real figure and certainly inclusive of some Arabs who only a short time before the conflict had moved to predominantly Jewish areas. Some further Palestinian outmigration from the West Bank occurred after the June 1967 war. A census carried out immediately after the war found 66,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem, 599,000 in the West Bank, and 356,000 in Gaza (Bachi, 1977). In 2017 about half of all Palestinians—6.1 million, or 49 percent—lived in Palestine, though not necessarily in their respective places of residence in 1948. Of these 6.1 million, 12 percent (1,439,000) were residents of Israel (excluding East Jerusalem) and 37 percent (4,624,000) lived in East Jerusalem (332,000), the West Bank (2,503,000), and Gaza (1,789,000) (see tables 2.4 and 2.5). Another estimated 5.6 million (45 percent of the total world Palestinian population) were in Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa, over 60 percent of them in Jordan. The remaining 700,000 (6 percent) lived in other countries, especially in North America, Latin America, and Western Europe.

Regardless of their nationality and refugee status, in 2016 the number of Palestinians registered as resident or nonresident in refugee camps was estimated by UNRWA at 792,081 in the West Bank (33 percent of the total Palestinian population), of whom 235,475 (27 percent of all refugees) were in camps, and 1,311,920 in the Gaza area (73 percent of the total population), of which 568,435 (54 percent of all refugees) were in camps (UNRWA, 2016). A refugee camp is a residential area whose housing quality ranges from slums to dense high rises, the quality of logistics being generally poor. These institutional figures reflect greatly diverse conditions of Palestinian refugees under the Jordanian and Egyptian administrations, respectively, over the years 1948–1967.

Regarding the Jewish diaspora, population projections based on assumptions about a continuation of recent demographic trends and changes indicate continuing growth of the number of Jews in Israel and continuing decline in the Diaspora. Consequently, in the course of the 2030s a majority of the world Jewish population might be found in Israel. Moreover, if current trends are not drastically reversed, the total world Jewish population in the course of the 2040s might recover to the size it reached in 1940 on the eve of the Shoah (see figure 2.7).

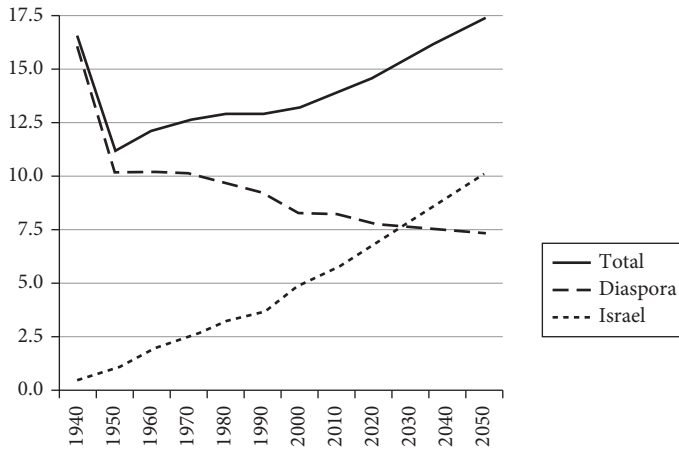


FIGURE 2.7 Jewish population in Israel and in the Diaspora, actual and projections, 1940–2050.

Sources: DellaPergola, Rebhun, and Tolts (2000); DellaPergola (2017); and author's estimates.

THE FUTURE OF THE ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN POPULATIONS

Population projections in Israel and Palestine anticipate continuing rapid growth in the total territory and within each of its components (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, yearly publication, 2017; PCBS, 2017). By the middle of the twenty-first century the population of more than thirteen million currently living in the entire territory could well have doubled. A population projection for the state of Israel through the year 2065 (see figure 2.8) shows that the ten million mark will be achieved in the early 2020s, fifteen million could be achieved in the late 2040s, and twenty million could be reached in the 2060s (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, yearly publication, 2017). Regarding the major population groups, projections show how a growing share of Jewish growth will reflect the more rapid growth of the Haredi (very religious) population component (see the chapter by Cohen in this volume). The Haredi share of the total Jewish population is expected to increase from 12 percent in 2015 to over one-third in 2050. The Israeli Arab population is expected to hold to its share of 21 percent, with minor increases expected in the longer term.

A retrospective look and population projection extended to the entire Israel/Palestine territory (see figure 2.9) shows the attainment of a Jewish majority during the early 1950s; more rapid population growth among Jews until the 1970s, followed by more rapid population growth among Arabs until the 2030s; and eventually renewed faster Jewish population growth in the longer term. As noted, this is largely due to the expected growing impact of Haredim among Israel's total Jewish population. The total Jewish population (enlarged to include non-Jewish family members) in the entire Israel/

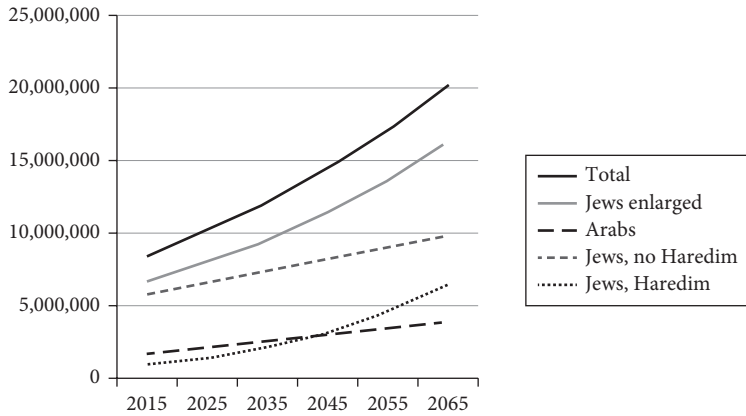


FIGURE 2.8 Israel population projections by major population groups, medium variant, 2015–2065.

Source: Data from Israel Central Bureau of Statistics; and author's estimates.

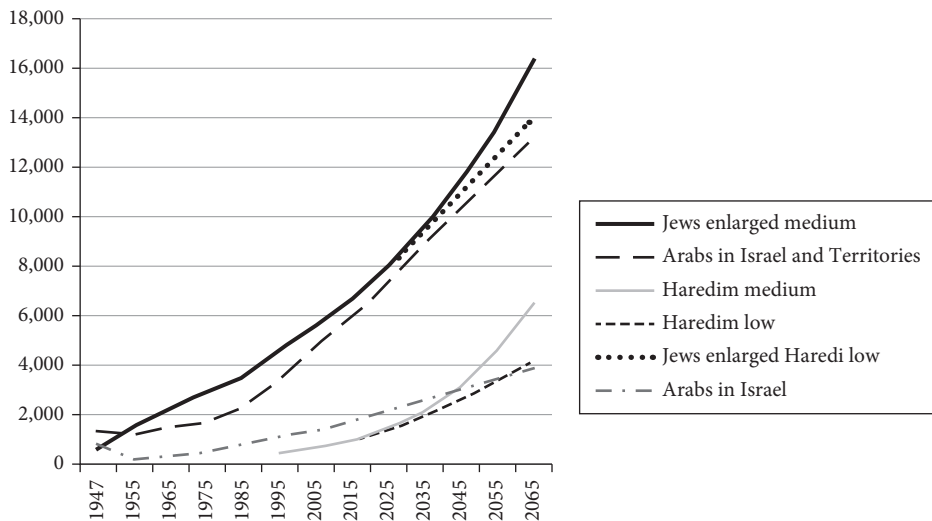


FIGURE 2.9 Jewish and Arab population in the total territory of Israel/Palestine, actual and projections, 1947–2065.

Source: Data from Israel Central Bureau of Statistics; and author's estimates.

Palestine territory in 2065 might be over sixteen million, and the total Arab population might be over thirteen million, for a total approaching thirty million. This would raise unprecedented challenges regarding population density and the quality of life in Israel/Palestine (Tal, 2016). Projections in figure 2.9 are based on Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics medium variant. Under the additional hypothesis that Haredi growth might gradually moderate (low variant), the (corrected) Jewish and Arab population growth would continue in parallel at nearly equal sizes.

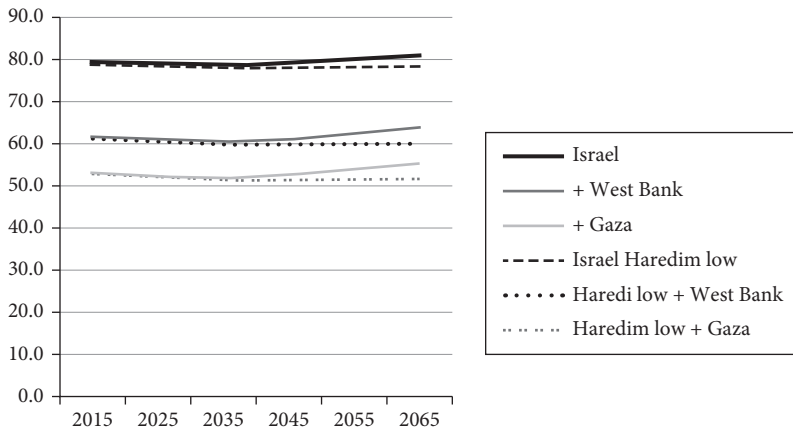


FIGURE 2.10 Percent Jews out of total population of Israel/Palestine.

Sources: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics; PCBS (); and author's estimates.

These estimates carry profound implications for the total population balance by major ethno-religious groups. Although—based on a definition of Jewish population enlarged to non-Jewish family members—a substantial Jewish majority of around 80 percent is expected to prevail within the boundaries of the State of Israel well into the second half of the twenty-first century, the picture changes if Palestinian territories and their populations are included (see figure 2.10). If the entire territory and population of the West Bank are added, the Jewish majority is reduced to 60 percent, and if Gaza's population is also included, the Jewish majority remains barely above 50 percent. All of these projections reflect Israel Central Bureau of Statistics medium variant. If a lower variant is assumed for the Jewish Haredi group, the Jewish population would grow more slowly, and its majority share would be reduced accordingly.

The impact of present and expected demographic trends on the future political configuration of Israel/Palestine cannot be overestimated.

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CHAPTER 3

STATE AND SOCIETY BUILDING IN EARLY ISRAEL

ORIT ROZIN

THE young Israeli state's dependence on the support of great powers, and the considerable cultural and political influence of other nations on it, have led some scholars to question whether Israel was really a sovereign state in its early years. Yet while dependence was a fact, Israel and its citizens acted with considerable independence, both politically and culturally, from the time of its creation.

Most Zionists aspired to establish a Jewish state from the time of the movement's inception. But its leaders, most notably Theodor Herzl and Chaim Weizmann, realized that the state would not be entirely independent and that Zionism would long need the patronage, recognition, and aid of a friendly power. That being the case, the movement accepted its dependence on Great Britain after acquiring the support of this major power during World War I. It was not until the Biltmore Program of 1942 that the Jewish national movement's leaders politely asked Britain to let go of it and grant it independence.

But even when the state of Israel came into being, it continued to seek the patronage of key countries (Reinhartz, 1992; Penslar, 2018). Derek Penslar asserts that "the State of Israel has remained a dependent, searching less for allies, as would be the case for most sovereign states, than for protectors" (Penslar, 2018). Indeed, the young state depended on Diaspora Jewry to provide funding and on other nations for credit, arms, and political and diplomatic support in the international arena (Levey, 1997; Penslar, 2013; Heller, 2010). Like other countries born in the era of decolonization, and like the nation-states of small peoples, Israel indeed required international recognition and significant aid from other countries. And like them, the influence of the colonial power did not evaporate in a day. Britain evacuated the territory of its Palestine Mandate in 1948, but in many specific and important ways it remained there, as manifested in its ongoing influence in the region, especially its indirect rule of Jordan. That influence could also be seen in the

British-American Alpha Plan of the mid-1950s and Britain's central role in the Sinai campaign (Shai, 2001; Asia, 1995). From Israel's point of view, however, the British hang-over was also a cultural one, even without Britain's making any efforts in that direction. British law served as the primary model for Israeli policy and legislation until the 1960s, when the United States (and for a few years, especially in cultural matters, France) replaced it as the prototype for emulation, study, and imitation in a variety of areas, and eventually also as a source of support (Troen, 2015; Gross, 1999; Heimann, 2015).

In Penslar's view, Israeli sovereignty was irreconcilable with its dependence on other nations and the Jewish Diaspora. In fact, the Jewish state's dependence on Britain did not prevent, and perhaps even facilitated, the development of its pre-state political society, the Yishuv, into a vital, organized community with a strong identity and autonomous culture. For all that the young state under the leadership of David Ben-Gurion was vulnerable, aware of the limits of its power, and dependent on foreign aid for its existence, it was a sovereign country that displayed a not insignificant measure of political independence.

NATION-BUILDING AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Sovereignty is undoubtedly linked to political status, yet in terms of both the labor movement and the Revisionist Right, it is not just a political phenomenon but also a disposition or mentality of a nation. Real sovereignty requires a consciousness of sovereignty, and that is not expressed only by control of territory or foreign policy; it must also be on display in a national culture. For that reason, the Zionist movement's thinkers and cultural producers, inspired by other European national movements, made transformation of Jewish culture a primary goal (Shavit, 1996; Shapira, 1997; Shavit, 1998). In its early years the Zionist movement included a number of distinct strands that mapped out different and even contradictory courses of action aimed at furthering the Zionist cause. The most salient division was between those who saw Zionism as a cultural project and those who advocated political and diplomatic action (Avineri, 1980). But by the first decade of the twentieth century, the tension between these two approaches was replaced by an understanding that the movement had to act on multiple fronts in the Diaspora and in Palestine (Shimoni, 2013). As the Yishuv grew and Zionist education in the Diaspora expanded, a new cultural repertoire came into being, encompassing most areas of life. Organizational institutionalization and cultural, social, and political development progressed hand in hand and enriched each other. The nation-building project was directed at creating a new Jewish individual. It is important to stress, however, that the various political currents in Zionism were profoundly at odds regarding precisely what kinds of people the new Jewish man and woman should be (Shapira, 1997).

From the end of the nineteenth century through the passage of the United Nations (UN) partition plan in November 1947, the Zionist movement pursued a wide-ranging and multifarious effort to fashion the image of the nation and its members. A wide variety of diasporic cultural agents played a role. In Palestine, a new national culture gradually emerged and slowly created a new Jewish consciousness (Shavit, 1996). Nevertheless, Diaspora Zionist culture differs in significant ways from the culture that came into being in the Yishuv and the state of Israel (see the chapter by Sucharov in this volume). In the Diaspora, Zionist culture was one option among many; immigrants to the Yishuv and Israel, and the children born to them there, developed a new identity, distinct from the native ones of Jews and non-Jews (see, e.g., Heller, 2015; Kijek, 2016).

Hebrew literature, which alongside the diverse and democratic political system was the best-developed focal point of the new culture, first came into being in the Diaspora. But in 1924, when the national poet and publisher Haim Nachman Bialik and his circle emigrated from Berlin to Palestine, the Yishuv became the center of Hebrew literature. Authors and poets were very important cultural heroes in the Zionist movement, the Yishuv, and the young state (see, e.g., Ben Gurion Archive, 1949; Shapira, 2014; Holtzman, 2011; Laor, 2014; Tsamir, 2006). Both Diaspora Zionists and immigrants who received ideological training in the Diaspora participated in the creation of this culture (Yona, 2013), as did those who were born in or grew up in the Yishuv and state (Elboim-Dror, 1996). Over time Jews who immigrated without prior ideological education also adopted the new cultural consciousness and its practices (Alroey, 2003), joined by at least a few Jews from the community that had lived in Palestine prior to the Zionist influx (Jacobson & Naor, 2016).

In a seminal paper, Itamar Even-Zohar (1980) has shown that the greater part of the new culture came into being in Palestine-Israel. Only there were the mental bonds that fused cultural practices in different fields into a coherent repertoire joined with Zionist ideology to produce the new Zionist man and woman. This happened even though alternative cultural systems were also available (Halperin, 2015). Those who were born or grew up in the Yishuv and state spoke Hebrew, a language that prior to the beginning of the twentieth century had not served as an everyday spoken idiom for thousands of years (Efrati, 2004). The Zionists of the Diaspora and Yishuv used organized popular and competitive sports to fashion a new Jewish body. At the beginning of the twentieth century, physical education was instituted in many Jewish schools, including those for women. Young Jews hiked and trekked, and folk dances were composed (Ben Israel, 2010; Roginsky, 2009; Zerubavel, 1995; Almog, 1997). A new emotional and mental connection to physical space came into being (Neumann, 2011). So did a new way of dressing (Helman, 2011), as well as a culinary repertoire that included new foods and new manners of eating (Rozin, 2006; Tene, 2015). The Jewish holidays were celebrated there in a way that maintained links with tradition but integrated many new elements (Shoham, 2014). Hebrew education in the land, from preschool through secondary school, served to inculcate not only the values of a range of political and educational groups, but also the contours of the family of Zionist ideologies that they shared (Dror, 2008; Bartal, 1999). There was also an impressive, if ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to

establish a new judicial system, separate from the courts of the rabbinate and British Mandate (Shamir, 2000; Likhovski, 2006).

The new cultural repertoire was assembled out of a blend of practices from a variety of sources. Some were relics of the cultural elements that Jewish immigrants had brought with them to Palestine and Israel, others came from the West and bore the marks of modernization, and still others were borrowed or appropriated from the local Palestinians (Even-Zohar, 1980; Hirsch, 2011; Zerubavel, 2008). Together they became a new amalgam of cultural knowledge, from historical consciousness to physical gestures and hygienic practices. Such a repertoire provides a way of distinguishing between, on the one side, those who belong to and are welcome to the nation, and on the other, those who are alien and rejected (Naveh, 2017; Bartal, 1999; Hirsch, 2014). This new culture was consciously constituted by its creators, even if its consumers were not always aware of that. In many cases it included a conscious effort to instill at least some of the new practices in, and at times to impose them on, outsiders and newcomers to the society, most notably the use of the Hebrew language (Shavit, 2009; Halperin, 2015). The new Hebrew culture was, it should be stressed, a strongly conscious one, even though its cultural agents were preoccupied with transplanting, recreating, and even preserving ancient or existing practices, objects, and concepts. Every furrow ploughed and every drop of sweat on the soil of the Land of Israel became a consciousness-changing experience (Neumann, 2011). Each time a pioneering woman at a kibbutz underwent rifle training or took part in guarding her kibbutz, she was participating in a gender role revolution and having a life-shaping experience (Chazan, 2015). The new culture was assimilated into the bodies and mentalities of the new Hebrews, and it included a new emotional regime (Biale, 1997; Rozin, 2016a). It should be emphasized, however, that the growth of the cultural repertoire among the members of the Yishuv, at least part of which was also inculcated in Zionists in the Diaspora, did not unite the Yishuv. Like every society, it was typified by a core cohort group that wielded great power. But there were also marginal groups, subcultures distinguished by, for example, socioeconomic class, political ideology, connection to religion and tradition, ethnicity, and length of residence in the country. The efforts to carry on the project of constituting and instilling a common cultural repertoire, as well as the divisions among subgroups, were even more salient in Israeli society after the foundation of the state.

THE TRANSITION TO STATEHOOD: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The transition from Yishuv to state included a profound transformation in many aspects of culture and daily life, but also no small measure of continuity. Regardless of its flaws, the solid political system that Israel inherited from the Yishuv ensured a successful passage to independence. The long gestation of embryonic self-governing democracy

under British rule, including a full-fledged political party system, made this possible. (Troen & Lucas, 1995). However, the transition from Yishuv to a state posed a major challenge to society at large and politicians in particular. Anita Shapira (1996a) notes that activists and politicians had difficulty adjusting to making decisions in new, broader, and unfamiliar forums, after being long accustomed to doing so in consultations among a small number of decision makers. The change required new institutions: an army, a parliament, a judicial and legal system, and a government bureaucracy. This involved dismantling existing institutions and political crises and coping with the sense of rupture and loss experienced by the people of the Yishuv as a result of these changes (Shapira, 1985; Gelber, 1985; Horowitz, 1993; see the chapters by Shapira and Arieli in this volume).

At the same time, the foundations of the new state were built on structures and institutions that had their origins in the Yishuv under the British Mandate. Some of these were created by the Yishuv itself and others by the British regime. One example offered by Shapira is the system of proportional representation, by which the members of the Yishuv chose their elected representatives, who autonomously administered important aspects of daily life. This method continues to be used in Israel to this day. Likewise, the Chief Rabbinate, founded by the Mandate administration on the basis of the Ottoman model, to this day holds a monopoly over marriage and divorce among Jews. The most important British imperial legacy was British colonial law, which remained in force for many years after the last British soldier left the country (Shapira, 1996a).

SHAPING ISRAELI DEMOCRACY

A number of decisions that set Israel's course, constitutionally and administratively, for many years to come were made during the period of the state's establishment (see the chapter by Mahler in this volume). Between November 1947, when the UN General Assembly approved Resolution 181, partitioning Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, and July 5, 1950, when Israel's Law of Return recognized the right of every Jew to immigrate to and settle in the new state, these decisions presumably also had a major effect on the Israeli mentality. Until February 14, 1949, at least, when the Knesset, Israel's parliament, held its first meeting, these decisions were made by legislative and executive authorities described by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion himself as revolutionary and undemocratic (Israel State Archives, 1948a). These included the promulgation of the Law and Administration Ordinance by the Provisional State Council on May 19, 1948, which stated: "The law which existed in Palestine on the 5th Iyar, 5708 (14th May, 1948) shall remain in force, insofar as there is nothing therein repugnant to this Ordinance or to the other laws which may be enacted by or on behalf of the Provisional Council of State, and subject to such modifications as may result from the establishment of the state and its authorities" (Israel State Archives, 1948b). The ordinance and the Provisional State Council's declaration of a state of emergency left the Mandate's law in

place and enabled the application of its emergency laws; to this day these enable the state to override ordinary democratic procedures and, for example, to place people in preventive detention and imprisonment without a trial (Israel State Archives, 1948b). The ordinance also preserved the barrier between civil law, which lies under the purview of the state, and religious law, which remains under the purview of rabbinical courts. These religious courts were granted extensive power over the personal status of Jewish citizens: marriage, divorce, burial, and membership in the Jewish people (Harris, 2014).

Other fundamental decisions made during this period include the transformation of the Constituent Assembly that was chosen in general elections in January 1949 into the Knesset, a parliament with the power to enact laws and not just a constitution. Another was the Harari Decision of June 13, 1950, in which the Knesset set aside the writing of a constitution and instead resolved to enact, gradually, a series of Basic Laws that would eventually, taken together, form a constitution in the future (Kedar, 2015). These decisions reflect not only political power relationships (and the dependence of the governing coalition established in 1949 on the Orthodox religious parties), but also the ideas, political affiliations, and opposing aspirations that had been skirmishing within the Zionist movement from its inception: tradition versus secularism, progressivism versus conservatism, and collectivism versus liberalism (Shapira, 1996a; Cohn, 2005; Lahav, 1999).

These efforts to concentrate power in the government's hands aroused the opposition of groups and organizations of the pre-state period, such as the Etzel underground. Opposition also greeted the state's efforts to enforce order and dictate norms of daily life. The state did not gain the obedience or cooperation of its citizens. Arab citizens opposed the military government that was imposed on them (Robinson, 2013), Yemenite immigrants opposed the imposition of secular education on their children, and immigrants from both Europe and the Islamic world protested their living conditions and the unfit food and housing. They fled the places they had been assigned to live in and even reacted violently (Zameret, 1997; Rozin, 2016b; Bashkin, 2016). Housewives and many others opposed the austerity program imposed on households by the government (Rozin, 2011). Self-employed Israelis refused to cooperate with the income tax authorities (Likhovski, 2017). At its inception, the state was dependent on the benevolence of other nations and the Jewish Diaspora from which it sought to distinguish itself. It also felt insecure; the largest portion of its Arab citizens lived under military rule, which restricted their freedom of movement and imposed other constraints, and the state also used its internal security service, the Shin Bet, to monitor political parties and large segments of the Jewish population. Among other things, the Shin Bet was used against tax evaders (Ozacky-Lazar, 1996; Spiegel, 2017), and the state also opened and read letters citizens sent to family and acquaintances abroad (Israel State Archives, 1950–1951). The legal, political, economic, and social reality of the state's first decade was largely incongruent with the vision of a democratic state, home to a utopian Jewish society made up of a new sort of Jew with a sovereign spirit.

But the rapid changes and clashing ideologies of that time make it impossible to offer simple characterizations. Society and polity went through constant shifts due to mass

immigration, the composition of coalition governments (eight governments in ten years), and economic and security constraints. In these formative years an ongoing political battle was waged over the identity of the regime; alongside struggles to advance rights and liberties and liberalize the economy, settlement policy was made more stringent, and the immigrant population was treated more firmly. In addition to an effort to halt growing economic gaps by securing equal wages, differential settlement policies of North African immigrants compared to East European immigrants (Bareli & Cohen, 2017; Picard, 2009) can be seen. As well as the use of coercive and/or corruptive measures by agents of the state, we find a leadership striving to hone civic democratic values within government and society. (Dowty, 1995; Kedar, 2015). For all their limitations, the Zionist movement and Jewish society in Israel achieved something very important.

PERCEPTIONS OF SOVEREIGNTY

On the political level, notwithstanding its dependence on great powers and the Diaspora and its weakness on the international stage, the new state displayed a not insignificant measure of political independence. For example, despite UN decisions and strong political pressure, including from the United States and Britain, at the end of the 1948 war Israel defended what most of its decision makers considered to be its critical interests. It did not give up the territories it had captured during the war, which lay beyond those assigned to it by the partition plan (Shalom, 1995); in the absence of a general settlement with its neighbors, it refused to allow most Palestinian Arab refugees to return to their homes (Morris, 1991); and despite the special status accorded to Jerusalem in the partition resolution and a General Assembly resolution of December 1949, it established its capital in that city. During the course of the 1950s, Israel initiated a series of reprisal raids, some of them large-scale, with political goals and implications (Morris, 1996).

On the level of intra-Jewish consciousness, the achievement was even greater. I thus propose now to turn from the institutionalization of sovereignty in its political aspect and, from the perspective of a later time, to discuss the perception of the experience of sovereignty by the members of Israel's society in real time. In the consciousness of Zionists throughout the Diaspora and in Israel, there is a huge difference between the weak Zionist movement and the state of Israel after the gains of the 1948 war and the country's acceptance into the UN in 1949 (Shub, 1950; Eytan, 1958). Israel was perceived as a viable state despite the existential anxieties that emerged from time to time (Gan, 2017). I claim that despite Israel's dependence on foreign aid, its Jewish citizens, and Diaspora Jews, viewed it as a sovereign state; its citizens believed that they had achieved political liberty.

Even if, like every modern nation, the Israeli nation is an imagined one, for many of the people of that time it was a solid historical fact (Ben-Israel, 2000). That was the case even though it was clear to all policymakers and every Jewish Israeli citizen that much

time and a large-scale cultural effort would be required to weld together the fragments of a nation that had been scattered all over the world for so long. Proof of this sense of attachment and affiliation to the nation can be seen in the enlistment of Jews from around the world in Israel's army and the massive assistance that Diaspora Jews extended to the young country (Penslar, 2013). Furthermore, while the men and women who served in the Yishuv's defense forces and then in the Israel Defense Forces did not then know what the Hebrew nation would look like, they nevertheless felt that it was worth fighting for (Kaniuk, 2010). The Israeli public displayed a high level of confidence in their country's institutions. This was evidenced, for example, by its adoption of the new Israeli currency after the local currency was detached by the British from the pound sterling (Barkai, 1990).

Even when Israel's actions on the international stage were constrained, its government was able to make decisions about the type of regime the state would have, and it could act to constitute the consciousness of its citizens. The citizens themselves—members of the pre-state Yishuv, Holocaust refugees, and immigrants from the Islamic world—felt that they belonged to the state, if not immediately after it was founded then after some time had gone by. They felt this way even when the state discriminated against them, disappointed them, and did not, in their view, represent their values. Such negative feelings, after all, testify to a system of expectations that depends on the existence of the nation as a mental construct and on a connection to the state that constitutes the political embodiment of the nation (Tsur, 2001; Segev, 1991; Rozin, 2016b). In time, despite their economic and social difficulties, discrimination, and alienation, the immigrants nevertheless acquired a new identity (Meir-Glizenstein, 2008; Yablonka, 2000); despite its flaws, the state gave its Jewish citizens a new sense of freedom that they had not previously known (Israel Defense Force Archive, 1957a, 1957b, 1952). But did the Zionist revolution manage in the end to constitute a sovereign state of mind? The answer depends on the horizon of expectations and the multiplicity of ideas about the nature of the new Jew and how those ideas were actually realized on the ground in the Yishuv and the Israeli state during the first half of the twentieth century (Shapira, 1997). All these models of the new Jew, as delineated by thinkers and writers, emerged, in any case, before political sovereignty was achieved, as a product of imagining rather than experiencing it.

Over the course of the state's first decade, systems of relations between the state and its citizens and between the groups constituting Israeli society came into being. The state and society were closely bonded, even if the state had yet to acquire the organizational power that would make it, like other Western countries, a "strong state" (Kabalo, *in press*; Migdal, 1988; Horowitz & Lissak, 1990). Ongoing economic, social, and military challenges weighed heavily on Israeli society and exacerbated the tensions among its components. Government policy, as well as action and inaction, also contributed to the strain. It would be wrong to say that the dream of creating a new Jew possessing a sovereign mentality entirely evaporated after the state was founded, nor did the dream of the nation as a united society living on the soil of its ancient homeland disappear, but the country's great needs and the fatigue of the "morning after the revolution" did not leave much space for utopian visions.

Perhaps paradoxically, it was not Israel's weakness and its dependence on outsiders that threatened the possibility of producing a new, sovereign Jew. More fraught was the heavy burden of history. Despite the successful attempt, over time, to create a clear distinction between Jewish life in the nation's homeland and Jewish life in the Exile, the memory of the Jewish past in general and the Holocaust in particular was constantly present; that was the case prior to the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961 and all the more so thereafter (Yablonka, 2000; Gan, 2017). The resurfacing of this repressed kind of Jewish identity can be seen in the reaction to the Czechoslovakian-Egyptian arms deal, shortly before the Sinai campaign, and even more in the mindset during the waiting period prior to the Six-Day War (1967) and the transformation of the Holocaust into a central element of Israeli identity following the Yom Kippur War (1973) (Hadari, 2002; Shapira, 1996b).

While the young state made a great effort to shape ordinary Israeli citizens, a broad swath on the margins of society remained partly or largely unaffected and in time served as the engine for major changes in both society and government. Israeli society of the 1950s and 1960s was led by a social and political center that advocated secular and modern ideas and aspired to close cultural ties with Europe and large-scale state involvement in society and the economy. The resistance movements that emerged from the margins eventually transformed Israeli society, making it more religious and granting it many characteristics of a modern Middle Eastern society. Beginning at the end of the 1970s, they also instituted neoliberal policies, with the government withdrawing from economic and social interventions (Peled & Shafir, 2005; Gutwein, 2017). The great difference between Israel at its inception and today is that today there is no longer an ambition to shape (Jewish) Israelis into a unified although heterogeneous society with a political project at its heart. That ambition to shape nation and society, which young Israel did not fully succeed in doing, has been replaced by a tendency toward sectoralisation and constant incitement of conflict between elements in society (Gutwein 2007; see chapters by Ram, Cohen, and Smootha in this volume).

STATE, SOCIETY, AND ISRAELI IDENTITY

The Zionist movement's dual and exceptional achievement is that in the space of half a century it founded a nation as well as an imperfect democratic country. The founding of the state changed the lives of Jews in Israel and the Diaspora, at that time and ever since. While Israel is dependent on the friendship of other countries, and especially on the United States, it has successfully produced Jewish citizens, veteran and new, who feel a sense of freedom, a measure of affiliation to and participation in their government, even those who do not always feel that they are being treated equally. This is not the case with Israel's Arab citizens, however, despite the change in the state's treatment of them that began with the elimination of military rule in 1966. While their political power has increased, equality between the country's Jews and Arabs has not been achieved.

Furthermore, the minority has maintained a separate identity, out of both choice and coercion (Ozacky-Lazar & Jabareen, 2016; Robinson, 2013).

The Zionist project, centered on the establishment of a country and society meant to constitute a sovereign mentality, did not fully achieve its goals. It is also doubtful whether the utopian ideas it offered were needed after the state came into being. The motivation to create a new sort of human being seems to have been abandoned, in part because the state instilled in its citizens values that were meant to serve the state and not necessarily those no longer relevant utopian ideas. The idea of creating a new Jew arose in the eighteenth century and remained relevant in one way or another until the mid-twentieth century. In the 1970s it was replaced by other ideas—fierce faith in economic liberalism, on the one hand, and the discourse of human rights, on the other. These ideologies did not seek to shape human beings in their entirety; rather, they sought to mold the economic, political, or legal environment in which ordinary mortals live (Moyn, 2010).

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CHAPTER 4

POLITICAL HISTORY OF ISRAEL

ANITA SHAPIRA

SHIMON Peres passed away in September 2016, aged ninety-three. He lived through the British Mandate in Palestine, the rise of the Left, the buildup of Israeli statehood, and the rise to power of the Right in a country that was flourishing but challenged by internal schisms. With his passing, the last of David Ben-Gurion's disciples who carried the idea of statism as a unifying and nation-building ideology disappeared from Israel's public scene (Kedar, 2009).

The story of Peres's life runs parallel with central processes in Israeli society: the rise and decline of the Israeli Left, the rise of the Right, and the growing power of the religious. These three parties accompanied the Jewish community in Palestine and Israeli society from their early days; the struggles among them, the public discourse, and the ethos they nurtured all shaped Israeli politics and society.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY UNDER BRITISH RULE, 1918–1948

The Jewish Yishuv (community) during the period of British rule (1918–1948) was a voluntary society; its institutions were based on consensus and compromise. The Yishuv was actually governed by the Zionist Executive, which represented the Zionist Congress and had an official position according to the British Mandate. During the Mandate the religious camp was weak, composed of the ultra-Orthodox, who boycotted Zionism, and the Hamizrachi, religious Zionists who participated in the Zionist Executive.

In the early 1920s the Zionist Congress functioned as a parliament of notables, but from the early 1930s two mass movements gained power: labor and the Revisionists. In Palestine the Left had wielded considerable power since the 1920s, with its ideology

based on striving for an egalitarian society, working the land, building a defense force, and Hebrew culture. These were the foundations of “the New Jew.”

The central organization of the Left was the Histadrut, the General Organization of Workers in the Land of Israel, which had a trade union arm and a constructive arm for building the country. It established kibbutzim, urban housing projects for workers, an educational stream, a bank (Bank Hapoalim), construction companies, health insurance, social care, and labor exchanges. The Histadrut’s relief agencies had a broad clientele of urban workers who backed it in its fight against the Right (Lissak, 1999; Shapira, 1995).

The Right was united around the figure of Vladimir Jabotinsky, a Jewish writer and publicist. Its worldview was shaped as a mirror image of the Left’s; whereas the latter viewed organizing the workers as an important objective and aspired to a protectionist labor market that gave preference to workers over employers, the Revisionist movement, organized by Jabotinsky in 1925, sought a free market and a liberal economy. Jabotinsky demanded “*Had-Ness*” (one banner, or monism), preference for the national interest, and deferment of all social struggles until Zionism was realized (Shavit, 1988).

The deeper issue was a political one: how to force Great Britain to meet its commitments to Zionism. The Left supported Chaim Weizmann, the president of the Zionist Executive, who sought to build the “national home” slowly and gradually. The Right backed Jabotinsky’s stance, which demanded that the British give preference to the Jewish settlers over the Arab majority, and the establishment of an “iron wall,” a Jewish legion that would block Arab resistance. The British rejected Jabotinsky’s demands. In 1933 the Left gained a majority in the Zionist Congress. It maintained its hegemony in Zionism and Israel until 1977. In 1935 Ben-Gurion, who led the Left camp and was chair of the Zionist Executive, reached an agreement with the religious-Zionist Hamizrachi, and thenceforth the latter was a loyal member of Mapai-led coalitions until 1977 (Galnoor, 1985; Shapira, 2014).

In the wake of the 1936 Arab Revolt, two major issues emerged: partition of the country between Jews and Arabs and monopoly over the use of force. The Palestine Royal Commission of Inquiry headed by Lord Peel, which was sent to Palestine to investigate the causes of the unrest, came to the conclusion that the League of Nations Mandate, which called for support of the Jewish national home while preserving the rights of the Arabs, was unworkable. The commission therefore recommended partition of the country into two independent states, one Jewish and the other Arab. This led to a stormy debate in the Zionist movement: on the one hand there was a chance of establishing an independent Jewish state, even though it would be in a tiny portion of the country, whereas on the other there was the loss of sites from Jewish antiquity on which the Zionist myth was predicated, which were excluded from the areas allotted to the Jews in the partition plan. The Right opposed partition, the Center was split, and Hamizrachi wavered but supported the position of Ben-Gurion and Weizmann, who were enthusiastic about the idea of establishing the state. The Labor movement was split: the opponents of partition were headed by its pioneering avant-garde, Hakibbutz Hameuhad. This phenomenon is unique to the Zionist Left, whose radical segment opposed any territorial compromise.

The debate was decided in favor of partition at the 1937 Zionist Congress, but not finally, and it would be reignited at moments of truth in the Zionist movement and the State of Israel.

The policy of the Zionist Executive on the Arab Revolt was one of “restraint” even when there were harsh Arab provocations. This policy stemmed from political considerations, but from an emotional standpoint it was very hard to accept. One of the principles of Zionism was that the New Jew should defend himself (Shapira, 1999).

There were young people who demanded a more aggressive response to Arab atrocities, and when the Zionist Executive refused, they left the Haganah militia, which was subordinate to the Executive, and formed the Irgun (Etzel). The Irgun was ostensibly subordinate to Jabotinsky but was in fact an independent militia that carried out acts of terror against the Arabs. The concept of an independent military organization that did not accept civil authority was considered a particularly dangerous precedent regarding discipline in the use of force. “The Secessionists,” the disparaging nickname given to breakers of discipline, were a constant concern for Ben-Gurion. He fought fiercely against military entities that would not accept civil authority. In the 1940s he attempted to fight the Irgun by handing over its fighters to the British. During the War of Independence the *Altalena* incident occurred in 1948, involving a vessel carrying arms that the Irgun had brought to the country and was not prepared to hand over unconditionally to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Ben-Gurion had no hesitation in giving the order to the defense forces of the young state of Israel to attack the ship. These events, which from a national standpoint were traumatic, eventually firmly established the concept that there is one government and one army, which obeys the government. The majority of the population accepted this, and to this day there has not been a case in which the military has flouted the authority of Israel’s civilian leadership (Galnoor, 1985; Shapira, 2014).

SMALLER ISRAEL, 1948–1967

The first nineteen years of the state were characterized by the formulation and construction of the idea of statism propounded by Ben-Gurion, who was prime minister from 1948 to 1963. Statism sought to concentrate power in state institutions. The underground organizations and militias were disbanded. Ben-Gurion transferred power from the Histadrut to the state. He terminated the “workers’ stream” and established a state education system. The Histadrut labor exchange became the state employment service. Ben-Gurion sought to build a professional civil service dedicated to the public interest. He wanted to dismantle the Histadrut Sick Fund, but his party prevented him from doing so. He established a parliamentary democracy that copied many of its facets from the British regime, and like Britain, Israel had no constitution. The main reason for this was the danger of a culture war with the religious parties: on the eve of the declaration of the state Ben-Gurion reached a status quo agreement with the ultra-Orthodox so that

they would support the establishment of the state. This agreement secured the status of religion in matrimonial laws and also stipulated Sabbath observance in public spaces. A constitution would have mandated defining the secular character of the state, which would have led to a head-on clash with the religious parties. Ben-Gurion therefore chose to defer the decision to future generations (see Mahler and Dowty in this volume).

To a certain extent Ben-Gurion's democracy was a "guided" one. This fact did not derive from a law but from the tremendous prestige he enjoyed in the eyes of veteran Israelis, more particularly among the new immigrants who now poured into the young state (Kedar, 2009).

Ben-Gurion's party, Mapai, was the central axis of all the coalitions formed until 1977. It became an apparatus party, whereby anyone in need of state or Histadrut services was dependent on it. It was challenged from the Left by the Israeli Communist Party (Maki) and the United Workers Party (Mapam); an alliance of two kibbutz movements, Hashomer Hatzair and Hakibbutz Hameuhad (which had split from Mapai in 1944); and their supporters in the cities that represented the radical Zionist Left. In 1954 Hakibbutz Hameuhad and its supporters founded an independent party, Achdut Haavoda, which was radical from a socioeconomic standpoint and politically aggressive.

From the Right, Mapai was challenged by Herut, led by Menachem Begin. Herut was the successor of the Irgun and was joined by followers of the Revisionist movement, whose leader, Jabotinsky, had died in 1940 and was buried in the United States. Up until 1967 this party, in all its incarnations, did not manage to garner more than 17 Knesset seats (out of 120). The party's platform, which demanded the whole of western Palestine for the state, seemed more provocative than practical. In 1965 the Herut-Liberal bloc (Gahal) was established, representing the Israeli Right and Center camps against the rule of the Left. Throughout all his years in government Ben-Gurion was prepared to form any sort of coalition, but without the Left and Right fringes ("Without Herut and Maki"). Levi Eshkol, who replaced him as prime minister, brought Jabotinsky's remains to Israel in a state ceremony, thus signaling that the stigma attached to Herut had been lifted. The legitimacy accorded to Herut facilitated the establishment of Gahal. Begin's demand regarding the integrity of the Land of Israel was not included in the Gahal platform (Medding, 1990).

Following the establishment of the state, Ben-Gurion supported mass immigration. The first immigrants were Holocaust survivors, but the pool of immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Balkans was rapidly exhausted. Mass immigration commenced from Middle Eastern countries, mainly Yemen, Iraq, and Morocco. Most of these immigrants were traditional or observant Jews, and the inept attempts made in the immigrant and transit camps to secularize them aroused fierce antagonism.

The immigrants admired Ben-Gurion as a sort of demi-messiah, but they abhorred Mapai and the Histadrut. Most of the people engaged in immigrant absorption were Ashkenazi Jews, who were unfamiliar with Middle Eastern culture and did not hesitate to denigrate the immigrants' customs and traditions, challenge the authority of the paterfamilias, and damage the cultural and social structures of these immigrants (see Willen & Zawdu in this volume).

They also exercised reverse discrimination, either spontaneously or consciously, in favor of the Ashkenazi immigrants, in housing, work, and opportunities for advancement. While the Mizrachim (an umbrella definition for all immigrants from Middle Eastern countries) continued to admire Ben-Gurion, they liked what Begin radiated; in contrast with the intentional slovenliness of the members of the Labor movement, who extolled proletarian simplicity and physical labor and attempted to dictate collectivist organizations to the new immigrants, Begin was the epitome of the buttoned-down culture of the white collar, suit, and tie. His petit bourgeois inclinations, coupled with his respect for Jewish tradition, spoke right to the Mizrachim's hearts. His grand style of rhetoric and his defamation of the leftist establishment, which to the Left sounded like demagoguery, to them sounded like the unvarnished truth. Begin broadcast a pure message of nationalism without the socialist additions that they perceived as the sources of their suppression and debasement. Their Zionism derived from religious traditions, not from secular nationalism and the anti-Semitism that characterized European Zionism. The notion of the New Jew, and more particularly the transition to physical labor, was anathema to them. Begin spoke to their breed of Zionism and became the authentic voice of the antiestablishment bloc in Israel (Eisenstadt, 1986).

By the 1950s the veterans of the Labor movement were fatigued and were inclined to take care of their private interests. They did, however, continue broadcasting the old socialist messages, even though the reality of life was more petit bourgeois and individualistic (Rozin, 2011).

Ben-Gurion's reprisal policy in the 1950s, which ended with the 1956 Sinai Campaign, engendered harsh criticism in his own party, but not from the Right or from the radical Zionist leftist party, Achdut Haavoda. Aside from the Arabs and the Communists, all the country's citizens were enthusiastic about the IDF's victories in Sinai (1956). When due to international pressure Ben-Gurion ordered military withdrawal, Begin protested vehemently, as did the Achdut Haavoda activists. But the majority of the Israeli population followed Ben-Gurion and admired his ability to make the decision to attack, as well as his decision to withdraw.

A traumatic event occurred on the eve of the Sinai Campaign. The commander of a border police unit misinterpreted an order from his superior officer, and as a consequence scores of Arab Israeli citizens of Kafr Kassem were killed. Israeli public opinion was shocked. Those responsible for the massacre were tried and sentenced to imprisonment. The judge determined that an order over which a "black flag" flies is an illegal order, which cannot be justified by the argument that a soldier was following orders.

The Kafr Kassem massacre turned a spotlight on the status of the Arabs of Israel. When the armistice agreements were signed in 1949, there were 160,000 Arabs in Israel. They lived under a military governorate in accordance with emergency regulations. Their travel was conditional upon permits, and in the first years violent searches were conducted in the villages; Arabs were treated as a potential fifth column. In the late 1950s there were increasing demands from Left and Right alike to rescind the military governorate, which was terminated only in 1966. But discrimination continued: Arabs did not serve in the IDF and were prevented from employment in the defense industries and in

many civilian industrial facilities that preferred to employ Jews. Although the villages were connected to the water supply and the electricity grid in the 1960s, they suffered from limited government funding. Clan rule in the villages persisted, which included discrimination against women and a low standard of education (Bar-On, 1994; Rekhes & Ozacky-Lazar, 2003; Smootha, 1999).

The Sinai Campaign was followed by ten years of quiet along Israel's southern border. They were years of internal stability. The change of government from Ben-Gurion to Eshkol in 1963 took place against the backdrop of an internal political scandal, the Lavon affair, but apart from a verbal storm, nothing came of it.

GREATER ISRAEL UNDER LEFT RULE

The Six-Day War (1967) changed Israeli reality in one fell swoop. On the eve of the war a national unity government was formed, which was joined by two ministers from Gahal, including Begin, and Moshe Dayan from Rafi, a party that had split from Mapai. After Eshkol's death in 1969, Golda Meir invited Begin and his party to continue serving in the new government, which was no longer an emergency government. Thus the granting of legitimacy to Begin was completed. In the 1969 elections that were called during the War of Attrition, the Alignment (a unification of all the Zionist Left parties) won fifty-six seats, Gahal won twenty-six, and the National Religious Party (NRP) garnered twelve. The Right made small gains, but the Left still had twice as many seats as the Right.

There was a feeling that Israeli military superiority would prevent another war. Begin resigned from the government in 1970, but the activist line represented by Dayan and Meir continued to be dominant. New settlements were established in the Rafiah Salient, northern Sinai, the Jordan Valley, and the Golan Heights, in areas sparsely populated by Arabs. The occupation was an "enlightened occupation" that maintained the links between both banks of the River Jordan, and commerce continued. Tens of thousands of Arabs from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip flocked to work in Israel, as well as in the settlements and military bases in the occupied territories. The construction of military bases in Sinai and the Golan Heights created a nouveau riche class of contractors and merchants (Shapira, 2012).

The Yom Kippur War of October 1973 was a shocking blow for the Israeli public. It undermined some basic assumptions, such as absolute faith in the IDF and, more important, the belief that the Left knew what it was doing and could be relied on. It was a moment of paradigmatic change in Israel: the fall from the triumph of the Six-Day War to what was known in Israel as "*the mekhdal*" (Israel's lack of preparedness for war), the surprise, and the approximately three thousand casualties led to a loss of confidence in the Left. In the elections held in the shadow of the war in December 1973, the Alignment won fifty-one seats, but Gahal made a great leap forward, to thirty-nine seats. The writing was writ large on the wall.

Dayan and Meir resigned in 1974, and a new government was formed by the legendary Six-Day War chief of staff, Yitzhak Rabin. This signified a changing of the generational guard: the mythological generation of the founding fathers was forced to leave the stage, and the generation of native-born Israelis took charge.

Rabin became prime minister due to his prestige and because of his noninvolvement in cabinet decisions on the eve of the Yom Kippur War. Lacking political experience, he displayed a lack of confidence in his role as prime minister. He made the right decisions: reducing inflation, which was galloping as a result of defense costs; signing the interim agreements with Egypt and Syria that stabilized the situation on Israel's borders; and authorizing the operation to rescue the Israelis kidnapped by terrorists and taken to Entebbe, Uganda. But all these actions, with the exception of the Entebbe rescue, were controversial. The Right criticized him over the interim agreements and the Left over the economic recession. And over all this the shock of the Yom Kippur War cast a pall.

THE TURNABOUT: BEGIN AS PRIME MINISTER, 1977–1984

When Rabin decided to call an early election in 1977, he hoped to be given a larger mandate by the electorate. But what happened was a historic turnaround: the Likud won forty-three seats and the Alignment only thirty-two. A new Center party, Dash (Democratic Movement for Change), won fifteen seats and the NRP twelve. Begin was summoned to form a government. The NRP joined forces with the Likud. When Agudat Yisrael, the ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionist party that had not joined a coalition since the early 1950s, also joined the new coalition, this signaled the direction that would be taken by the right-wing government: a blend of nationalism and religion (Ben-Rafael, Schoeps, Sternberg, & Glöckner, 2016; Horowitz & Lissak, 1989; Sprinzak & Diamond, 1993).

“The Upheaval,” namely the transfer of power from the Israeli Left to the Right, was ostensibly caused by a specific event: the appearance of Dash, which appropriated votes that in the past had gone to Labor. However, it reflected deep-seated changes in Israeli society. Dash represented the Israeli middle class, which was fed up with the socialist notions of Labor. Its leadership was composed mostly of people who had made a career in the IDF, academia, and business.

The confidence that most Israelis had in the old Labor leadership waned. In a way it was the magnificent success of the 1967 war that led to “The Upheaval.” The controversy over the occupied territories led to a process of radicalization in the NRP and even among Labor supporters. The previously faithful ally of Labor moved to the far right, and its leadership passed into the hands of younger people dedicated to the idea of Greater Israel. The move from the pragmatic politics that characterized Labor to ideo-

logical politics was the result of the encounter with the historic/mythic areas of Jewish antiquity in the West Bank. These processes were exacerbated by the coming of age of the generation of Israeli-born or Israeli-educated immigrants who had come to the country in the 1950s and early 1960s. Their frustration and feelings of alienation fueled their oppositional stance. The convergence of all these factors brought about "The Upheaval." Although until then Israelis had treated the rule of Labor as the natural way of things, no democratic regime can stay in power forever, and now the people felt that they deserved a change.

Begin was well aware of the suspicion with which he was regarded worldwide. To obtain legitimacy, he undertook several actions. He granted asylum to a group of Vietnamese refugees who had been refused entry by other countries. He appointed Dayan foreign minister, and he advanced secret peace negotiations with Egyptian president Anwar Sadat. Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977 turned Begin from a man whose skills at leading a democratic country had been in doubt into a national leader of international standing.

Begin's first term as prime minister was marked by the peace treaty with Egypt, but it also bore important implications in the spheres of culture, society, and the economy that shaped the State of Israel. Begin sought to alter the state's historical memory, to shift the center of gravity from the ethos of the Left to that of the Right, and to dismantle the socioeconomic structures that supported the Left. He sought to extol the narrative of Betar, the Revisionist youth movement, and that of the Irgun, in contrast with that of the Haganah and the Palmach. Traumatic events from the past, like the murder of Haim Arlosoroff, the head of the Jewish Agency Political Department who was killed on the beach in Tel Aviv in 1933, of which the Revisionists were accused by the Left, were put on the agenda anew. Begin established a commission of inquiry to investigate this incident with the intention of removing the shadow of suspicion from the Betar members accused of the murder. He presented a narrative converse to that of Ben-Gurion's on the incident of the *Altalena*, the arms vessel that had been sunk on Ben-Gurion's orders, and in opposition to the accusation of an Irgun mutiny against the IDF, he claimed that it was a malicious plot to destroy the organization. The new narrative was designed to grant legitimacy to Betar and the Irgun, which for years had been excluded from Israel's historical narrative.

To counter the "Israeliness" of the Palmach and the kibbutzim, Begin made remembrance of the Holocaust a dominant element of Israeli identity and politics. His frequent mentions of the Holocaust, speaking in Yiddish, and the warmth he radiated toward Jews opened the hearts of American Jewry to him.

From the first moment, when he placed a yarmulke on his head and intoned the "Who has given us life" blessing at the victory gathering of Likud activists, he highlighted his admiration of religion and his intention of nurturing its place in society. As part of his agreements with the ultra-Orthodox, he annulled the ceiling that had been in place with regard to the number of yeshiva students exempted from military service, which increased to tens of thousands. When financial support for yeshiva students was added to this, a generation of a (yeshiva) "student society" was born that lives off the state

budget, does not work, and does not contribute to the economy. The closed ultra-Orthodox society, wherein every attempt to force it to include core subjects in its curricula has failed, presently encompasses more than two hundred thousand young people, an increasing percentage of the Israeli population.

From the start of his premiership Begin promised “to benefit the people.” This principle, as interpreted by his party comrades, finance ministers from the Liberal Party, meant dismantling the protectionist market that had been in place since the establishment of the state, liberalization of trade in foreign currency, removal of restrictions on imports and exports, and so forth. Overnight Israel was transformed from a social-democratic welfare state into one with a free, open, capitalist market. But whenever budget cuts were called for as part of the liberalization process, Begin objected, and the result was galloping inflation.

The government no longer supported failing enterprises, especially Histadrut ones. The full employment policy maintained in them led to inefficiency, which ended with privatization. Many kibbutzim lost their capital due to inflation, which lasted until 1985. Liberalization and inflation gave people the feeling that savings were worthless and that it would be better to purchase consumer goods, which for the first time were exempt from the duty imposed on them in the past. Consumerism had arrived in Israel (Bareli, Gutwein, & Friling, 2005; Shilon, 2007).

The 1981 elections constituted a test for the Right: Had its rise been by chance, or was it an expression of a historic change? In the election campaign Begin played the ethnic card: he portrayed the Left as Ashkenazim and the Right as the authentic representative of the Mizrachim. The campaign was replete with incitement on an issue that until then had had no legitimacy as a political weapon. Over the years there had been Mizrachi demonstrations and organizations that had risen up against their depressed social and economic situation, such as the Wadi Salib riots in Haifa in 1959 and the Black Panthers, a group of radical young Mizrachim active in Jerusalem in the early 1970s. Begin portrayed the kibbutzim, the standard-bearers of the Left, as parasites who were depriving the Mizrachim. This incitement spoke to the hearts of the Mizrachim, who experienced genuine deprivation and a lack of economic and social mobility.

The result of the 1981 elections was almost a tie between the blocs, and Begin managed to form a right-wing government. His second term was a mirror image of the first; whereas in the first he had been relatively moderate and mainly advanced the peace process with Egypt, in the second he appointed Ariel (Arik) Sharon as minister of defense, went to war in Lebanon, and shattered the national consensus that until then had held sway in foreign affairs and defense policies. Begin declared “a war of choice” (as opposed to one of no choice), which ran counter to the defensive ethos that had characterized Israel in its wars, which were presented as defensive wars. For the first time since the establishment of the state there were cases of unwillingness to serve in the army. The number of casualties in Lebanon rose from day to day. Demonstrations were held outside Begin’s home, with the demonstrators holding placards stating the number of casualties. Begin resigned in 1983 and withdrew from political life.

THE AGE OF POLITICAL PARITY, 1981–1991

Elections were held again in 1984, and the parity between the two major blocs was maintained. But on this occasion a national unity government was formed that was designed to fight inflation and withdraw the IDF from Lebanon. A rotation system was introduced whereby Peres and Yitzhak Shamir would each serve as prime minister for two years. Peres halted inflation and even managed to withdraw the IDF from Lebanon, except from a buffer zone running along the border with Israel.

The 1984 elections saw the emergence of a Mizrahi party, Shas (Shomrei Sfarad, Guardians of the Sephardim), led by Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. It represented Mizrahi religious orthodoxy, which was less radical than the Ashkenazi variety; its young people served in the army and it viewed itself as part of Israeliness, not as the representative of a closed enclave. The ultra-Orthodox were politically moderate, and Rabbi Yosef, Shas's spiritual leader, declared that it was permissible to vacate territory if it meant saving lives. Shas would also be prepared to join Left-led coalitions in the 1990s, something that the Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox parties had not been prepared to do since the early 1950s. Shas, therefore, would be the factor that tipped the scales in the governments of the 1990s, which enabled it to receive large financial benefits. Shas entered the crack opened up in the Israeli welfare state in the 1980s, which gradually disappeared as a result of privatization. The party established a support apparatus for its supporters, from kindergarten education through yeshivas, all funded by the public purse (Leon, 2009).

In 1973 Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) emerged. It consisted of a group of graduates of the Merkaz Harav Yeshiva, which was affiliated with religious Zionism. For its members the Six-Day War was clear evidence of the imminent appearance of the Messiah, and in the meantime they had to settle the land and ensure that the government did not vacate territories. Immediately after the war they embarked on promotion of Jewish settlement in the occupied territories. They attempted to settle in populated areas of Judea and Samaria, but the army evacuated them several times. At the time of the Rabin government, they succeeded in establishing a first settlement, in contravention of government orders. That was the first breakthrough. With Begin's rise to power, unlimited possibilities were opened to them: Begin supported the integrity of Greater Israel and was not prepared to sanction withdrawal from territories on the West Bank of the River Jordan. When the Camp David Accords were implemented and the northern Sinai and Rafiah Salient settlements were dismantled, Gush Emunim stood at the forefront of the opposition against withdrawal. Active in the early 1980s was an underground group of Gush Emunim vigilantes that attempted to assassinate the mayors of Arab towns in the West Bank. The group was arrested by the General Security Services, and its members were sentenced to long prison terms. But the "Gush" continued its activities. Its power lay in the education system it had established, which educated generations of Gush loyalists. The enlistment capability of the Gush was greater than the number of its members; every time they felt under threat by the army or the state, thousands of men would show

up with their women and children to demonstrate in front of the Knesset, block roads, and hold rallies. They established settlements in the heart of Palestinian territory in the hope of preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state, sometimes with governmental acquiescence and at other times with agreement given after the fact. During the negotiation of the Oslo Accords and peace process discussions in the 1990s, it was they who led the fight against the accords and acted to delegitimize Rabin and his government (see Pedahzur & Perliger in this volume).

Extremism also appeared in ultra-Orthodox society. During the era of the Rabin government in the 1990s and the Ehud Barak government at the end of the decade, Shas was part of the coalition. But the relatively moderate Shas leadership no longer represented the party faithful who had become extreme nationalists (Shafat, 1995).

The weakness of the government of the 1980s resulting from the parity between the two major parties opened the way for the influence of the courts in the political arena. In the 1980s, and even more so in the 1990s, the court was the country's liberal stronghold, defending civil rights, the principle of equality, freedom of speech, and minority rights, including those of Palestinians. On more than one occasion the court challenged the government and even rescinded laws. The court's power lay in its prestige, both in Israel and internationally. The judicial system investigated cases of corruption in the political system and did not shy away from sending ministers and even a prime minister to jail. The Right attempted to limit the powers of the court, while the Left viewed it as the stronghold of democracy. This is an ongoing struggle (Harris, 2014; Harris, Kedar, & Likhovsky, 2002; Mautner, 2008; Rozin, 2016).

In 1987 the first intifada, the Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule, began. The IDF was unprepared for a popular uprising, and the media portrayals of well-armed soldiers chasing women and children tarnished Israel's image in the world.

PEACE PROCESS AND POLITICAL POLARIZATION, 1992–2000

In 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait, and the First Gulf War broke out. Israel readied itself for a barrage of Iraqi missiles, and the country's inhabitants shut themselves into sealed rooms with their gas masks. The Palestinians supported Saddam Hussein and thus squandered the advantage they had gained in world opinion during the intifada. At the same time there was a wave of mass immigration to Israel from the USSR, numbering some one million souls. Absorbing these immigrants necessitated receipt of American guarantees for loans taken out by the Israeli government. The Americans conditioned the guarantees on Israel's participation in a peace conference to be held in Madrid, and Prime Minister Shamir was forced to agree. Thus began the peace process that characterized the 1990s. In the 1992 elections the Left won sufficient seats to enable it to form a government. Rabin was elected prime minister.

Relations with the Palestinians have been the main item on the public agenda in Israel since the 1980s (see Sela in this volume). The division between the two camps, Left and Right, ceased to be based on socioeconomic topics; the processes of privatization, an open economy, and liberalization were granted global legitimacy in the 1980s by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. The collapse of the USSR was clear evidence of the superiority of the capitalist system over the socialist one. The Israeli Labor movement accepted the collapse of the welfare state, as well as the new socioeconomic regime. The 1990s saw a turnaround in Israel from traditional industries to high tech. Having a place of work for life ceased to be assured. Workforce mobility undermined the standing of the trade unions. Nationalization of the Sick Funds removed the need to belong to the Histadrut, which until then had conditioned membership in its Sick Fund upon membership.

The disparity that remained between Left and Right was political: the Left sought a territorial compromise with the Palestinians in return for peace, whereas the Right bitterly opposed any territorial compromise west of the Jordan. The Left was deeply concerned about the demographic problem that would be created if the West Bank were formally annexed to Israel. How could Israel remain Jewish and democratic with such a large Arab minority? The Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization paved the way for the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian recognition of Israel. The Rabin government was dependent on the votes of the Arab members of the Knesset. The Right contended that decisions on crucial national issues should be made only by the votes of Jews. Both camps adopted increasingly extreme rhetoric, and there was no discourse between them. Incitement from the Right, led by the NRP and the Likud, broke the conventions of public discourse: it portrayed Rabin as a traitor who merited a death sentence. Rabin's assassination was a foregone conclusion. It caused national trauma, which for a short while appeared to have halted the zealotry and extremism of the public discourse. In 1996 Rabin's successor, Peres, held a general election. The result, to the consternation of the Left, was that Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu won by a slender margin. The polarization of the two camps continued. The formation of a national unity government like that in the 1980s was no longer an option.

The principal change that took place in internal Israeli politics was the fragmentation of the political map: in the second half of the 1990s, instead of two leading national parties, several medium-sized parties emerged, with which the leading party had to negotiate and which were able to dictate economic, social, and sometimes political terms (see Hazan in this volume). In 1999 Barak won the elections and rekindled the hope of completing the peace process. But the Camp David Summit ended in failure. On the eve of the summit the Barak government lost its parliamentary support.

THE RULE OF THE RIGHT SINCE 2000

In September 2000, with the failure of the Camp David Summit, the second intifada erupted. It was much more violent and exacted more victims than the first. The Left

accused Barak of destroying the peace process by claiming that Israel had no partner, but what destroyed Israeli belief in the peace process was the second intifada. Barak was forced to resign, and Sharon formed a right-wing government that stabilized the political situation in Israel. Since that time there has been continuous rule by right-wing parties in conjunction with Center and religious ones. Throughout this period the Left has been unable to form a bloc that would have a majority. The combination of nationalism and religion has been decisive in Israeli politics. Demography played into the hands of the Right: the ultra-Orthodox grew demographically, as did the Mizrachim. Most of the Jews from the former USSR preferred the Right. The Right's nationalist combativeness spoke to their hearts despite the dominance of the Chief Rabbinate, which did not recognize hundreds of thousands of immigrants not born to Jewish mothers as fit for marriage (Rosenthal, 2017).

When the second intifada broke out, there was also incitement to violence and rioting among Israeli Arabs. The police quelled the riots using excessive force, and there were casualties. The riots expressed the identification of the Arabs of Israel with their brethren in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Since the encounter with the Palestinians in 1967, and more particularly since the first intifada, radicalization among them had taken root. Nationalist feelings rose to the surface and were manifested in the 2000s in what is known as "The Future Vision Papers of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel," a document in which they demanded not only equal rights but also national-territorial rights, a sort of Palestinian autonomy in Arab-populated areas in Israel. The appearance of Islamist streams and religious extremism within them added a further layer of alienation and distancing between the two national communities in Israel. The Arabs refused to recognize Israel as the state of the Jewish people and demanded that it be "a state for all its citizens." These relations characterized the first decade of the twenty-first century (Ozacky-Lazar & Kabha, 2008; Smoocha & Ghanem, 1998; see Jamal and Ghanem in this volume).

After political and economic instability in the first years, the 2000s were a decade of economic growth in Israel. When the global economy was in crisis in 2008, Israel came through unscathed. The innovative high-tech industry flourished, bringing huge investments into the country. There was an overall increase in the standard of living, and many of the immigrants of the 1990s found their place in Israeli society. But parallel to the growth of the young nouveau riche, high-tech class, there were many young people who did not manage to find their place in the new economy. The traditional industries had come down in the world, and their employees were paid low wages and had limited social mobility. From an egalitarian state, Israel became one of the most polarized of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (see Shalev & Mandelkern in this volume).

The 1990s saw a revolution in higher education in Israel: in addition to the universities, a system of colleges was established that enabled access to countrywide higher education. These colleges taught sought-after professions like law, business management, and economics, in which employment could be found. Nevertheless, polarization increased in Israeli society. While the ultra-Orthodox and Arab sectors did not integrate

into Israeli society, young middle-class people found themselves, like their counterparts throughout the West, unable to replicate their parents' economic success.

In 2011 a social protest erupted, with mass rallies on issues of housing, kindergarten fees, and cost of living. This protest mainly encompassed young secular Ashkenazim and did not break through to the hearts of the Mizrachi, Arab, or religious middle class. It did, however, highlight the tremendous effects of the "swinish capitalism" of the 2000s and led to improvements in Israel's social policies.

The attempts by Prime Ministers Sharon and Ehud Olmert to reach a peace agreement with Palestinians failed, shaking the confidence of Israelis regarding the possibility of reaching such an agreement that would stand a chance of being accepted by Israel. In the first decade of the twenty-first century the idea of two states, one Jewish, the other Palestinian, on the West Bank of the Jordan was accepted by the majority of Israelis. But in the second decade this idea was eroded due to the Palestinians' rejection of a generous proposal by Olmert. Evacuation of the Lebanon security zone by Barak only brought the radical Shiite Hezbollah closer to Israel's northern settlements. The unilateral evacuation of the Katif Bloc by Sharon led to the radical Sunni Hamas seizing control of the Gaza Strip. All this was seen in Israel as proof of the ineffectiveness of conciliatory moves. Close to half a million Jews are currently living in the West Bank territories. The Palestinian issue continues to be a bone of contention between Left and Right, with the Right contending that its opposition to compromises stems from security needs, but in truth its origins lie in the Greater Israel ideology. The Left, on the other hand, presents the demographic problem as critical: How can Israeli democracy be preserved in a situation of rule over another people (Abulof, 2015; Goldscheider, 2015)?

The three elections that took place in 2019–2020 reflected the schisms in Israeli society; although Prime Minister Netanyahu was facing several charges involving corruption, and the same applied to additional members of his party and other right-wing parties, this did not prevent the Right from retaining power in the elections. A new centrist party, Blue and White, emerged and even competed closely with Likud in the three elections. But the coalition of the Likud and the religious parties held firm, and in the end Blue and White split, with half its Knesset members joining a new Netanyahu government. The attacks of the Right against the judiciary may come to a head in the Knesset, where it is up to the opposition to fight attempts to curtail the power of the courts.

But at the same time Israel's economic growth continues, the standard of living is rising, and the country's commercial and foreign relations are flourishing, including with some Arab states. Polarization and demonization of Right and Left are on the rise as a result of the government's incitement and its presentation of the Left as traitorous, while the Left emphasizes government corruption. Social media provide a platform for every extreme and ephemeral opinion and intensify the incitement. Side by side with polarization is liberalization in several spheres: women's and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights; bringing the ultra-Orthodox to higher education; and providing benefits for Israeli Arabs. An impressive Arab middle class has emerged in Israel, which seeks enhancement of its conditions and advancement.

According to a definition by President Reuven Rivlin, there are currently four “tribes” in Israel: Ashkenazim, Mizrachim, ultra-Orthodox, and Arabs. This definition erases the achievements of the “melting pot” of the 1950s and 1960s in creating a single Israeli identity (see Ram and Smootha in this volume). It also emphasizes ethnicity and religiosity at the expense of political or social concepts. The percentage of mixed-ethnicity marriages is constantly rising. Mizrahi culture in particular and Mizrachim in general are prominent in all walks of life, and their weight is gradually increasing. The discrimination they suffered in the first decades of the state is waning, although the alienation is reignited and fueled by politicians and the media. If we put aside the Palestinian issue, which continues to bleed, the critical issues facing Israel today are integration of the ultra-Orthodox into education and the economy and continued integration of Arab citizens into Israeli society and the economy. The future of Israel in the twenty-first century depends on achieving both.

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CHAPTER 5

DEMOCRACY IN ISRAEL

ALAN DOWTY

THE words “democracy” and “democratic” do not appear in the 1948 Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, the nation’s founding document. What does appear is a commitment to “complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex,” and more specifically a call to Arab inhabitants to “participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation.” But equality among different segments of a state’s population does not necessarily guarantee democracy; a nondemocratic government could equally suppress all groups. Nor does democratic governance necessarily guarantee equal rights for all groups; the problem of “tyranny of the majority” has been a venerable theme of political theorists since antiquity.

Israel does not have a formal written constitution, but it does have thirteen Basic Laws, some of them entrenched in higher requirements (compared to ordinary legislation) for repeal or revision (see the chapter by Mahler in this volume). Three of the Basic Laws do define Israel as a democratic state. The first Basic Law adopted (The Knesset, 1958), as later amended, bars any party or person who negates “the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state” from running in national elections. Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty (1992) and Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation (1992) both set out as their fundamental purpose the establishment of “the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.” These last two Basic Laws, and others, also specify a number of basic human rights that the state may not violate. In some other Basic Laws, such as Government and President, there are also requirements for majority votes regarding key procedures.

The formula of a “Jewish and democratic state,” however, opens the door to arguments that these two parameters exist in tension with, if not outright contradiction to, each other. To the extent that Israel explicitly identifies itself as a Jewish state—something that founding documents leave in no doubt (Kretzmer, 1990)—can it be truly democratic as that concept is generally understood? Conversely, would a fully democratic Israel have to dilute or even disavow its explicit Jewishness to be counted among

the family of democratic nations? The question should be addressed before proceeding to look more closely at the actual fabric of Israeli governance.

NONDEMOCRATIC BY DEFINITION?

For some observers, there is simply a fundamental contradiction between Jewishness and democracy. In the words of one critic, “To the extent that Israel is a Jewish state, it cannot be a democratic state” (Chomsky, 1976, p. xi). This conclusion clearly rests on certain definitions of both “Jewish” and “democratic.” Taking the Jewish issue first, it assumes that a “Jewish” state would be based on race, religion, or both.

If Jewishness meant racial exclusivity, there would be some merit to the claim that a “sovereign state of the Jewish people” is the same as a “sovereign state of the White people” or of the Anglo-Saxon people (Chomsky, 1976, p. viii). But this is an analogy that few Jews would accept. Jews in Israel and elsewhere are demonstrably a mixed racial group. Identity as a Jew is typically passed down as a heritage from generation to generation, but it is also a choice; one may choose to become Jewish, or cease being Jewish, without regard to genetics. Over the centuries Jews have come to resemble the host populations of countries where they reside, and thus in modern Israel the “ingathering of the exiles” has resulted in a population of mixed physical characteristics.

Were Israel a “Jewish” state in the sense of operating by religious law—were it in fact a theocratic state—this would also support the claim that ipso facto it cannot be democratic. Judaism as a religion, like other religions, posits basic tenets that take precedence over determination by numbers (“Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil,” according to Exodus 23:2). But Israeli laws, by and large, are secular laws determined by a secular political process in which religious political parties are secondary competitors and far from dominant. In fact the basic criticism of Israel’s governance from the religious camp is that it is *not* based on the Torah and *halacha*, on traditional Jewish religious law. Jewish religious precepts are applied only in certain areas of family law (marriage and divorce), and then only in the Jewish community; as in most other Middle Eastern states and some elsewhere, each religious community is allowed to follow its own practices in these areas deeply embedded in religious custom (see the chapters by Cohen and Ben-Porat in this volume).

What then does “Jewish” mean in the context of a “Jewish and democratic state?” For most Israelis, and most Jews generally, their Jewishness is a national or ethnic identity as a historically developed community with distinctive cultural, linguistic, and religious attributes. Having distinctive religious practices as part of their ethnonational identity makes Jews noteworthy, but not unique, in the world’s ethnic tapestry. Jews are a people, a nation (in the original sense of the word), an *ethnos*, not essentially different from the many other peoples, from the Germans to the Arabs, who were discovering or rediscovering their national identities during the period in which Zionism made its appearance.

As perceived by its standard-bearers, Jewish nationalism was of the same substance as other nationalisms, to be judged by the same standards.

Furthermore, if an “ethnic” state is deemed undemocratic by definition, this would challenge the legitimacy of the basic concept of “nation-state” upon which much of the modern international order is predicated. A “nation” is typically defined as “a people connected by supposed ties of blood generally manifested by community of language, religion, and customs, and by a sense of common interest and interrelation” (Snyder, 1990, p. 230). Most “ethnic” groups, and certainly Jews, would meet this definition. When this is extended to the idea that “nations” have a right of self-determination, and thus to the model of the nation-state, there are no grounds for classifying a Jewish state in a different category.

Interestingly, the Israeli Supreme Court has addressed the issue of what the “Jewishness” of Israel means. The court had to decide what it would take to disqualify a political party for negating Israel “as a Jewish state” (see previous discussion of Basic Law: Knesset). The ruling was that it meant (1) maintenance of a Jewish majority, (2) the right of Jews to immigrate, and (3) ties with Jewish communities outside Israel (Israel, 1988). These requirements do not conflict with democratic principles as generally understood, and they are not unique to Israel. Nation-states have an ethnic component in their identity, many states grant citizenship on the basis of ethnicity or descent, and many maintain relations with ethnic diasporas.

Thus a “Jewish” state, as a state with a largely Jewish population and a dominantly Jewish culture, is not necessarily less democratic than any state structured around a dominant ethnic group or groups. The question is whether the dominant group or groups practice democracy among themselves and whether they extend it to citizens from other ethnic groups. This is a question to be answered by observation, not by plays on words or a priori assumptions.

A second disqualification by definition involves what one means by “democracy.” In judging whether Israel is democratic or not (or in more sophisticated terms, how democratic Israel is), two essential conditions need to be met. First, there must be clear, operationalized criteria by which states can be measured objectively; vague requirements of “majority rule” or “government by the people” are not useful. Second, the same criteria should be applicable to all states, so that their implications can be seen clearly. A set of ideal standards that disqualifies all states would not be very useful.

The most serious scholarly portrayals of Israel as a nondemocracy are by Ghanem, Rouhana, and Yiftachel (1998) and Yiftachel (2006). In the first work the authors offer a clear definition: “We perceive [democracy] as a system of government based on several key principles: (a) equal and inclusive citizenship and civil rights, (b) popular sovereignty and universal suffrage, (c) protection of minorities, and (d) universal and free elections” (Ghanem, Rouhana, and Yiftachel, 1998, p. 255). To this is added a *de facto* fifth requirement: a democracy must have clear borders.

The definition seems reasonable, if somewhat lacking in clear operational guidelines (e.g., how does one measure “protection of minorities”?). The real question, however, is how far the requirement for equality and protection of minorities is to be extended. Can

any nation with ethnic or national minorities—which is nearly every nation in today’s world—lay credible claim to achieving full and complete equality, in law and in practice, for all groups within its borders? Certainly Israel could not. Apart from laws that privilege the Jewish component of Israel’s identity (see previous discussion), Arabs are clearly excluded from important areas of Israeli life. But would the United States qualify as a democracy by these standards? Would even the relatively homogeneous states of northern Europe qualify, given recent problems with immigrants?

Operational definitions of democracy generally employed by political scientists, as discussed later in this chapter, do not specify full equality of minorities as a definitional *sine qua non*. In fact, the inequality of minorities would hardly surprise classical theorists of democracy, who underlined the problematic implications of majority rule for those not in the majority. The concern about “tyranny of the majority” in a democracy goes back to the Greeks, who gave this form of government a name, and runs from Plato and Aristotle through Federalist No. 10 and Alexis de Tocqueville. One can of course argue that a definition of democracy *ought* to include minority rights and apply such a definition to Israel. But it would be reasonable to ask that the invocation of tougher standards be presented as such, along with some idea of what such standards would imply for other states generally classified as democratic. Otherwise, judging a single state in isolation will almost certainly lead to imposition of a double standard.

As a point of departure, therefore, a Jewish state is not by definition either democratic or undemocratic. We need to start with reasonable working criteria that define democracy, then observe the actual operation of the Israeli political system.

CONTEXT: OBSTACLES AND LEGACIES

By any definition democracy in Israel’s genesis would have seemed highly unlikely to contemporary observers. The obstacles to the emergence of stable democratic institutions, still the preserve of a few advanced nations at the time, were daunting.

Relatively few of the Jewish immigrants to Palestine or Israel, since the emergence of Zionism in the 1880s, came from countries with a viable democratic tradition. Furthermore, they came to Palestine/Israel as refugees dominated by a sense of insecurity and vulnerability (probably some three-quarters would have met the standard international definition of refugee, fleeing because of “a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (as defined in the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951).

Over the course of the twentieth century those who came encountered a pervasive state of conflict, requiring full mobilization of manpower and resources, overwhelming dependence on the military, and a near-constant state of emergency. The defense burden, in relation to the size of the economy, far surpassed the level of defense spending in any other democratic state. The country was also plagued by serious threats to internal cohesion, with a significant minority identified ethnically with the enemy and deep

communal, religious, ideological, and political cleavages within the Jewish community itself (see the chapters by Ram and Smootha in this volume).

Given the small size, historical legacy, and state of emergency, founders established a government with a very centralized structure. Authority was concentrated on the national level, with few institutional constraints on executive power so long as it was supported by a majority in the Knesset, Israel's parliament. The ideologies imported by early settlers often supported this concentration of power. Labor Zionism, especially more leftist factions, flirted seriously with democratic centralism and other doctrines of elite control then current in eastern European revolutionary circles. The nationalistic Right—Revisionist Zionism—stressed the values of unity, military strength, and strong leadership.

Jewish religion, like other religions, often challenged the presumptions of democracy. From the religious perspective, the dictates of God-given law must always take precedence over man-made rules and institutions. Many in the religious (Orthodox) community refused to recognize the legitimacy of democratically derived laws that in their view conflicted with the “higher law” developed over the centuries by rabbinic Judaism (see the chapter by Cohen in this volume).

Finally, after the 1967 war many Israelis asked how long democratic institutions could be maintained within Israel itself while the military administration of territories occupied in the war continued. These territories (except for East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights) were not made juridically a part of Israel but fell under the international law of belligerent occupation. This law was never designed for protracted periods of control, creating a reality of creeping *de facto* integration that threatened to erode democracy not only in the occupied territories but also in Israel itself (see the chapter by Barak in this volume).

Given these circumstances and pressures, how was it possible that the *yishuv* (Jewish community) of pre-state Palestine, and Israel itself after statehood, evolved even a pretense of democracy? The answer lies, at least in part, in other aspects of the Jewish legacy.

Jewish experience in self-government over the centuries has actually been extensive; Jews have often managed their own communal affairs. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* lists over 120 cases of Jewish autonomy, in various forms, over the ages. Wherever Jews lived, they held in common not only the heritage of Jewish law and other normative Jewish institutions but also patterns that arose from their universal position as a beleaguered minority: contention with a hostile environment, provision of needs that could be met only within the community, self-organization to minimize the intervention of outside authorities, and maintenance of relations with those authorities.

The primary institution of Jewish political expression, as it developed over time, was the community itself: the *kehilla* or *kahal*. The classic *kahal* that flourished in the Jewish towns and villages of Poland and Lithuania during the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries had most of the aspects of a political system. Jewish communities elected both secular leaders and rabbis, levied taxes, maintained courts with varying types of sanctions, established extensive welfare systems, passed laws regulating extensively all

aspects of life in the community, and appointed agents (*shtadlanim*) as “diplomats” to represent the community in its relations with external authority.

At the end of the eighteenth century most of this population was incorporated into tsarist Russia, which thus became the homeland of over half the world’s Jews and the historical context of most importance to the subsequent history of the Zionist movement and of Israel. The tsarist regime formally abolished the *kahal* in 1844. But Jewish self-government continued to function unofficially, as demonstrated by the continuing efforts of the Russian government to suppress such activity. In 1870 the Council of State declared that Jewish communities were “a secluded religious and civil case, or one might say, a state within a state,” and called for a commission “to consider ways and means to weaken the communal cohesion among the Jews”; subsequently the commission received a report that the Jews “possess complete self-government in their *kahals*” (Levitats, 1981, p. 10).

Thus, before the emergence of Zionism, before the spread of Western liberal, socialist, and nationalist ideologies, Jewish communities had long experience with voluntaristic and representative political institutions. In eastern Europe in particular, Jewish self-government had achieved a strong hold on communal life and consciousness. While in most respects not democratic by contemporary standards, it contained within itself the seeds for democratic growth. As Shlomo Avineri concludes, “It is in those myriads of Jewish communities, struggling to survive in a hostile environment, carving out for themselves their rules and regulations and developing their institutions, that we have the origins of Israeli democracy” (Avineri, 1985).

The voluntary character of Jewish self-government was of decisive importance. The *kahal* was backed by state enforcement in some cases, but with limited means, especially by the late nineteenth century, when the Russian *kahal* no longer formally existed. In the end enforcement did not depend on formal sanctions as much as on the reputation of the rabbis issuing decrees, public opinion and pressure, and shared values and interests such as offering no pretexts for outside intervention. Active participation and cooperation were highly dependent on the goodwill of community members. In a very real sense, it was government by consent of the governed.

Since it was voluntary, Jewish self-government also had to be inclusive. Disgruntled groups and individuals could opt out of active participation in the community. Given the need for unity against a hostile environment, there was a strong incentive to give all groups in the community a stake in the system. The principle of proportionality in power and benefits was widely understood and applied before the term itself came into use, as the only conceivable approach in a community or movement that lacked governmental powers.

The best expression of the “participatory mode” in Jewish politics was the regular conduct of elections, in times and places where electoral politics was unknown in the surrounding societies. In the classic *kahal*, both lay leaders and rabbis were chosen by a group of electors (*mevorerim*), who were in turn elected by all eligible voters. Elections were regarded as events of great importance and were vigorously contested. Eligibility to

vote rested on the payment of taxes, sometimes at a specified level, but scholarship could be substituted for wealth in some cases. Elections to important positions were for fixed terms, thus upholding the accountability of those elected and providing for rotation in office (Katz, 1971, pp. 87–88, 106–110).

Given its voluntaristic and inclusive nature, Jewish politics was inevitably pluralistic. Each community chose “secular” officials as well as a rabbinic leadership, and the lines of authority between the two were often unclear and thus the cause of controversy. Further divisions within the Jewish communities came as a result of new spiritual and intellectual currents. Among these was Hasidism, a movement of religious renewal and mysticism, and later the *Haskala*, or Jewish Enlightenment, which served as a vehicle for Western liberal ideas and inspired new forms and organs of political activity. The *Haskala*, whose influence among Russian Jews peaked after the middle of the nineteenth century, did not fit easily into the old leadership or the old *kahal* order. It created, in fact, a “public space” where none had existed before (Lederhendler, 1989, pp. 82–83, 112–113, 132–133). It served as a bridge between traditional politics and the modern political movements that emerged shortly thereafter; many of the early Zionists were *maskilim* (followers of *Haskala*).

The pluralism of late nineteenth-century Jewish life, in the Russian setting, was striking. Groups of all types proliferated: artisans’ guilds, mutual aid societies, cultural associations, political parties, educational groups, savings and loan associations, defense organizations, charitable associations, burial societies, and workers’ groups. According to one estimate, in the late tsarist period each Jewish community had on the average some 20 different associations, while the large city of Vilna had a total of 160 in 1916 (Levitats, 1981, pp. 70–71; Baron, 1976, p. 100). The existence of different centers of power also helped legitimize opposition; even rabbinical decisions could be impeached, since there were competing authorities who could be invoked against each other (Zborowski & Herzog, 1952, p. 214).

Note, however, that traditional Jewish politics seldom dealt with non-Jews within the community. Relations between Jews and non-Jews were under the jurisdiction of the state and governed by non-Jewish law. The essence of Jewish law toward “strangers” was humanity; the idea of civic equality of Jews and non-Jews in a Jewish society was as unthinkable as the idea of equal status for Jews in non-Jewish society was at that time. Furthermore, the injunction of humane treatment was geared solely to the individual, not to non-Jewish groups who might claim recognition of their collective identity. Jewish communities never had under their jurisdiction large non-Jewish populations seeking to maintain their own collective identity, and thus Jewish political traditions were singularly unequipped to deal with such a situation.

In summary, Jewish history, especially in eastern Europe but also elsewhere, included a striking exposure to a certain kind of political experience. The main elements of this experience were (1) a struggle for survival on both the community and the individual levels in a hostile environment; (2) self-regulation through well-developed legal and judicial institutions; (3) processes for selecting the community’s own leadership, with at

least some input from the larger public; (4) provision of a broad range of community services without reliance on the outside; (5) a resulting tendency to a collectivist or cooperative model of social organization; (6) enforcement without recourse, in most cases, to the most direct forms of coercion; and (7) typically, a gap between the formal structure of power and the actual influence patterns within the community.

Though not “democratic” by modern standards, these governing practices provided a foundation for the growth of democratic institutions. They did this through modes of participation that reflected the essentially voluntary nature of community membership, by fostering an attitude of skepticism toward all authority, and by developing a body of law that *de facto* mandated important basic human rights.

Jewish politics was marked by competition between different centers of authority, the lack of defined hierarchy, proliferation and influence of organized groups, and the reality of bargaining and power sharing, rather than the undiluted rule of the majority. In the parlance of modern democratic theory, these features would be characteristic of a consensus or “consociational” system rather than a strictly majoritarian democracy (Lijphart, 1990).

However, traditional Jewish politics also contained serious sources of weakness in terms of democratic potential. One was the long habit of secrecy, of concealment and closing off from the outside. A second was the absence of civic habits as they developed elsewhere and a contentious and even unruly style of politics. But the most glaring weakness of traditional Jewish politics derived from the very strength of its sense of community: there was little guidance or experience in encompassing groups who were not a part of this community (see the chapter by Galnoor in this volume).

ISRAEL IN STANDARD RANKINGS

With this background of the problems and legacies of the Jewish and Israeli experience in mind, how have political scientists rated Israel against other nations on scales of democratic and nondemocratic governance? In the framework of operational definitions applied across the board to all states, Israel has consistently been classified as a democracy or, in some cases, as a flawed democracy.

Dankwart Rustow applied the following four criteria in 1967:

1. The free flow of information and the free expression of opinion.
2. The competition of party programs and candidates for electoral approval.
3. The control of the government by elected representatives.
4. Either (a) periodic changes in the composition of the ruling majority or (b) representation of all major electoral trends within it.

Application of these criteria to existing states led to a list of thirty-one democracies, including Israel (Rustow, 1967, pp. 94, 290).

Robert Dahl suggested a set of eight requirements for democracy (or “polyarchy” in his preferred terminology) in 1971:

1. Freedom to form and join organizations.
2. Freedom of expression.
3. Right to vote.
4. Eligibility for public office.
5. Right of political leaders to compete for support and votes.
6. Alternative sources of information.
7. Free and fair elections.
8. Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.

Consequently Dahl classified twenty-six states (circa 1969) as “fully inclusive polyarchies,” including Israel (Dahl, 1971, pp. 3, 9, 248).

Tatu Vanhanen used two quantitative measures to represent the two dimensions of Dahl’s criteria (contestation and participation) and ranked Israel 11th of 147 nations on an “Index of Democratization” for 1980 (Vanhanen, 1991). Michael Coppedge and Wolfgang Reinicke (1991) developed a “polyarchy scale” based on Dahl’s criteria and updated the data to 1988. Israel was ranked in the second highest of ten groups of states on the polyarchy scale. Finally, Arend Lijphart (1984, 1994), also using Dahl’s criteria, identified 23 nations that had been continuously democratic since the immediate post–World War II period—including Israel.

G. Bingham Powell established five criteria for democracy in 1982:

1. The legitimacy of the government rests on a claim to represent the desires of its citizens.
2. The organized arrangement that regulates this bargain of legitimacy is the competitive political election.
3. Most adults can participate in the electoral process, both as voters and as candidates for important political office.
4. Citizens’ votes are secret and not coerced.
5. Citizens and leaders enjoy basic freedom of speech, press, assembly, and organization.

Powell concluded that twenty nations had continuous democratic regimes from 1958 to 1976, including Israel (Powell, 1982, pp. 3, 5).

A team of scholars led by Adam Przeworski in 2000 posited a set of four rules for a state to qualify as a democracy:

1. The chief executive must be elected.
2. The legislature must be elected.
3. There must be more than one party.
4. The incumbents must have lost at least one election.

Using these rules, all nations were classified by regime type for the 1950–1990 period, with Israel classified as a parliamentary democracy for the entire period (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, & Limongi, 2000, pp. 18–28, 59–69).

Recognizing that it is somewhat simplistic to force states into a dichotomous, either/or framework, recent studies have tended to rank states on a scale of democracy.

Freedom in the World, published annually by Freedom House since 1973, in its 2006–2019 editions ranked Israel among the “Free” nations, with a high ranking on political rights and a moderately high ranking on civil liberties (Freedom House, 2006–2019). However, in a separate *Freedom of the Press* index, in 2017 Israel was ranked as “Partly Free,” primarily because of government pressure on, and decreased competition within, the media (Freedom House, 2017). This point is further discussed later in the chapter.

The *Global Report 2017*, issued by the Center for Systemic Peace, ranks political systems on a scale from –10 for fully institutionalized autocracy to +10 for fully institutionalized democracy. The principal criteria are the ways executive power is acquired and transferred, how political power is exercised and constrained, how social order is defined and maintained, and how much influence public interests and opinion have on the decision-making process. On this scale Israel has been ranked between +6 and +9, qualifying as an institutionalized democracy (Marshall & Elzinga-Marshall, 2017).

Given the proliferation of attempts to measure democracy, one team of scholars has devised “Unified Democracy Scores,” which synthesize eleven different democracy scales into a single scale. On this scale, which ranges from –2.5 to +3.5, Israel ranked 43rd of 205 states in 2012, with a score just above +1.0 (the highest ranking was just above +2.0) (Pemstein, Merserve, & Melton, 2010; Unified Democracy Scores, 2014).

One of the more interesting and exhaustive measures of democracy is the Democracy Index developed by the Economist Intelligence Unit, which uses a battery of no fewer than sixty indicators of democracy along five dimensions: electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, democratic political culture, and civil liberties. Scores on these indicators are converted to a scale of 0 to 10, with nations above 8 classified as full democracies and those between 6 and 8 as flawed democracies. Israel, with a score of 7.86 in the latest published index, fell just below the line in the flawed democracy category (as did the United States, at 7.96) (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2019). It is also notable that Israel’s lowest score on the component indexes (5.88) is on civil liberties, encompassing limitations on media, freedom of association, judicial independence, equality before the law, discrimination, and security pressures.

Perhaps the most daunting research enterprise ranking states on scales of democracy is the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project (V-Dem Institute, 2020). Covering 202 nations over a period of 130 years, V-Dem employs over 350 indicators and 52 indexes to measure the full range of variables associated with democracy in its various dimensions, drawing on the contributions of more than three thousand scholars in 170 countries.

In its latest annual report (2020), V-Dem ranked Israel forty-ninth among the nations studied—just outside the top quartile—on its summary Liberal Democracy Index. This index encompassed variables related to electoral democracy and the additional

components of rule of law and judicial and legislative constraints on executive power. The V-Dem data also help to identify points of relative weakness in Israeli democracy. These include freedom of association, given limits on eligibility of political parties and other constraints. Freedom of expression is another relative weakness, reflecting government censorship and other influences on the media, media self-censorship, and harassment. There are also weak points on equality before the law and on equal access (to political power), both matters involving the position of Israel's Arab citizens. Finally, a lower ranking in judicial constraints on the executive is somewhat surprising given the generally high reputation of Israeli courts, but it follows from the lack of a constitution and other formal limits on the executive (see the chapter by Hofnung & Wattad in this volume).

The bottom line, however, is that all of the academic efforts to classify nations as democratic or nondemocratic, using generally accepted operational criteria applied equally to all states, have concluded that Israel is a democracy—perhaps a flawed democracy, but basically in the democratic camp. This matches the common popular understanding of democracy. For example, in a 1999 survey of Palestinians, 75 percent rated the status of democracy and human rights in Israel as either “good” or “very good,” against 67 percent for the United States, 55 percent for France, and 32 percent for the Palestinian Authority (Center for Palestine Research and Studies, 1999).

CURRENT CONCERNS

Outside evaluations of Israeli democracy are complemented by systematic surveys carried out by researchers and institutions within the country. Foremost among these is the Israeli Democracy Index, compiled annually by the Israel Democracy Institute. In its latest edition, this extensive analysis of Israeli opinion generally substantiates the conclusions of international rankings but also highlights some of the weaker aspects of Israeli thought and practice regarding democratic norms (Israel Democracy Institute, 2019).

The findings in the 2019 survey were that 34 percent of Israeli Jews, and 38 percent of Israeli Arabs, believed that the state of democracy in Israel was either “quite bad” or “very bad.” In a combined sample of Jews and Arabs, represented proportionately, fully 54 percent agreed “very much” or “quite a lot” that Israeli democracy was in grave danger. This was reflected in low levels of trust in political institutions: only 30 percent of Jews said that they trusted the Knesset or the government (for Arabs the figures were 24 percent and 28 percent, respectively).

Given the general “democratic recession” in the world in the recent past, perhaps it is not too surprising to see some erosion also in Israel. It may be a sign that the historical path of becoming “a nation like other nations” has negative as well as positive implications.

The weaker elements in the Israeli public's democratic ethos have already been identified in the international rankings previously discussed, particularly in the V-Dem, Economist Intelligence Unit, and Freedom House analyses. Broadly speaking, these relative weaknesses can be categorized under freedom of expression, freedom of association, equality

before the law, and judicial constraints on the executive. Most of these problematic aspects are of course ultimately related to the Arab–Israeli conflict, either as security issues or as questions of the status of Israel’s Arab citizens.

Freedom of Expression

As Freedom House summarizes, “The Israeli media sector as a whole is vibrant and free to criticize government policy” (Freedom House, 2019). However, the media are subject to prior censorship on sensitive security matters (Dowty, 2001, pp. 96–98), and recently the requirement of prepublication review has been extended to social media. Security officials also can obtain court-issued gag orders on particular subjects, a practice that has been on the rise. Journalists may also face restrictions on their travel and access to sensitive areas.

Recent Knesset laws have added other specific restrictions on expressions of opinion. A comprehensive antiterrorism bill passed in 2016 criminalized support for terrorist acts and other broadly defined offenses. Another law enacted in the same year increased penalties for disrespect to the flag. And in March 2017 the Knesset adopted a law denying entry visas to supporters of boycotts against Israel or territory it controls, including Jewish settlements on the West Bank.

There has also been an increase in attacks on the media by the prime minister and other government officials, including defamation suits brought on grounds of libel. The appearance of a free daily newspaper subsidized by a US supporter of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also reshaped the structure and diversity of the press in Israel. This newspaper, *Yisrael Hayom*, has become the leader in circulation, forcing other newspapers to lower advertising rates and limiting their reach. The prime minister has been indicted for using this supportive newspaper as leverage to try to secure more favorable coverage from its main competitor; a second indictment levies a similar charge involving an online news agency (see the chapter by Markowitz-Elfassi et al. in this volume).

While serving simultaneously as minister of communications, Prime Minister Netanyahu also initiated a reorganization of regulatory bodies supervising broadcast media that threatened to increase the government’s control over radio and television. In addition, the Ministry of Culture made continuing efforts to cut public funding to the arts, on nonartistic grounds, when unpopular views were expressed.

Underlying these actions and proposals on the official level is a somewhat soft level of support for freedom of expression among the general public. In one recent survey by the Israel Democracy Institute, 38 percent of all respondents *disagreed* with the statement that “freedom of expression should be protected, even for people who speak out against the state.” And fully 53 percent of the Jewish respondents agreed that “people who are unwilling to affirm that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people should lose their right to vote” (Israel Democracy Institute, 2016).

Freedom of Association

Efforts have been made in recent years to delegitimize groups that criticize official policies or publicize matters that are potentially embarrassing to the state. In July 2016 the Knesset approved a bill requiring all nongovernmental organizations that receive most of their funding from foreign governmental sources to disclose this information in all of their publications. The law was clearly aimed at human rights organizations and other groups on the political Left that are largely dependent on such funding; it did not cover private foreign sources, the chief source of funding for right-wing groups. The clear intention was to stigmatize the targeted organizations as agents of foreign interests rather than as domestic Israeli actors. In March 2017 this was extended by a provision preventing the same organizations from receiving national service volunteers.

Another law passed in March 2017, as an amendment to the political parties funding bill, introduced a broad definition of “bodies active in the elections” and imposed strict restrictions on their funding and activities. Critics argued that this would have a severe dampening effect on political activities of nonparty organizations and discourage citizen participation in politics. The apparent aim, in their eyes, was to maintain the dominance of existing parties in the electoral process.

Again, moves against groups perceived as harmful to national interests are supported by compliant public opinion. In one survey by the Israel Democracy Institute, 71 percent of Israeli Jews agreed that “human- and civil-rights organizations cause damage to the state” (Israel Democracy Institute, 2016).

The coronavirus pandemic that hit Israel in early 2020 raised new issues of government surveillance viewed by many as a threat to privacy, if not to basic civil liberties. Israeli intelligence services had developed methods of tracking cellular phones as a way to keep tabs on persons of interest as threats to security. In the framework of trying to contain the spread of COVID-19 infections, this technology was applied to persons known to be infected in order to enforce their quarantine and, by extension, to alert others who may have come into contact with them and even to put them into quarantine. In contrast to security cases, approval by a judge was not required in these cases, raising serious concerns about governmental overreach. This, together with other harsh measures taken during the coronavirus crisis, triggered serious protests capped by a massive demonstration in Tel Aviv on April 20, 2020—with the protesters carefully maintaining the mandated social distance from each other.

Equality before the Law

In July 2016 the Knesset passed an amendment to Basic Law: Knesset that authorizes the expulsion of a Knesset member who encourages terrorism or incitement to violence. The new law requires the vote of 70 members of the total 120 (including 10 from the opposition) to initiate proceedings and a vote of 90 members for expulsion. Though not

explicit, the bill was clearly aimed at Arab members of the Knesset whose public statements might be construed as giving support to the “armed struggle” against Israel. In the interpretation of Israel’s leading civil rights organization, it was clearly a case of “tyranny of the majority” and had the potential to cause “the permanent exclusion of entire sectors from the political system” (Association for Civil Rights in Israel, 2017).

Public opinion in Israel about the rights of the Arab minority has been ambivalent. In theory all are equal before the law, and only a minority of 29 percent of Israeli Jews agree that “Jewish citizens of Israel should have greater rights than non-Jewish citizens.” Fully 53 percent agree that Israeli Arabs are discriminated against. But when asked whether crucial decisions on peace and security should only be made by a Jewish majority—that is, that Arabs should be excluded from these decisions—72 percent of Israeli Jews agreed. Another critical index is support for or opposition to the inclusion of Arab political parties in a governing coalition, something that has never happened in Israel’s history. In one recent survey, 53 percent of Israeli Jews remained opposed to the idea. This did, however, represent a slight decline from the 62 percent opposition expressed on the same question in 2003 (Israel Democracy Institute, 2016; see the chapters by Jamal and Ghanem in this volume).

A bigger challenge to equality came with the passage, in July 2018, of Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People. This law defined the State of Israel as “the national home of the Jewish people, in which it fulfills its natural, cultural, religious, and historical right to self-determination.” The only mentions of non-Jewish minorities were a guarantee of their right to their own days of rest and the granting of “special status” to the Arabic language. The latter was actually a demotion from Arabic’s previous standing as a second official language, though with the confusing proviso that this “does not harm the status given to the Arabic language before this law came into effect.”

Defenders of the Nation-State Law argued that the affirmative declaration of Jewish self-determination did not necessarily impinge on the rights or equal civic status of non-Jewish individuals. Critics maintained, however, that it was what was missing in the legislation as adopted that made it especially ominous to non-Jewish citizens. The values of democracy, equality, and human rights—as affirmed in Israel’s Declaration of Independence and other Basic Laws—are strikingly absent. Furthermore, the law states that “the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.” This would seem to rule out recognition of Palestinian Arabs as a collective partner in the kind of consociational democratic practices that many observers feel would be the most realistic solution for Jewish–Arab relations within Israel.

In January 2019 Israel’s Supreme Court announced that it would hold hearings on the constitutionality of the Nation-State Law, which was challenged on the grounds that it conflicted with the Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty. However, these hearings were delayed because of the three elections of 2019–2020 and were last scheduled for September 2020. In coalition negotiations after the March 2020 election, the Blue and White party, which had favored an amendment to the Nation-State Law affirming the equality of all citizens, dropped this demand in the framework of the final coalition agreement.

In the meantime, the debate over the Nation-State Law, together with other pressures, had a positive impact on Arab participation in the political process. Arab voting turnout, which had been on the decline, actually rose during the three elections of 2019–2020: from 50 percent in April 2019, to 60 percent in September 2019, and finally to 65 percent in March 2020. In the last of these contests, a unified “Joint List” of Arab parties emerged as the third largest bloc in the Knesset.

Judicial Constraints on the Executive

Israel’s legal and judicial system, as it has functioned throughout the nation’s history, has generally been regarded as one of the stronger elements of the civic order. The Supreme Court in particular has often intervened in defense of human rights and democratic values even when they were not explicitly anchored in formal law. But in the absence of a constitution that would define relations between the judiciary and the executive more precisely, and in reaction to judicial interventions that have been unpopular in some circles, a number of proposals for curbing the Supreme Court’s role have been advanced. Most of these projects encountered significant opposition and were not adopted. But following the March 2020 election and the formation of a government of the two major parties, there was a significant challenge to the independence of the judiciary. The coalition agreement, through a slight change in the composition of the Committee on Judicial Appointments, made it possible for the government—and more particularly the Likud component of the government—to veto the appointment of judges viewed unfavorably. In a situation where Likud Prime Minister Netanyahu was under indictment and facing possible Supreme Court rulings on his eligibility to remain in office, this seemed to many to be a critical challenge to the rule of law.

In addition, other elements of the 2020 coalition agreement between Likud and Blue and White also raised serious issues regarding judicial and legislative powers as a check on the executive. Many involved amendments to the Basic Laws: establishing a new emergency form of government for six months, setting a fixed term for the Knesset in advance, requiring a supermajority vote when the leaders of the two parties disagreed, and requiring new elections if either leader were disqualified as prime minister. The last measure was clearly aimed to discourage the Supreme Court from intervention into Netanyahu’s establishing of a new government. All in all, in the eyes of critics, the two parties had taken it upon themselves to make constitutional changes without constitutional authority.

CONCLUSION

If Israel is judged by the same standards as other nation-states, it qualifies as a highly participatory, institutionalized democracy. The roots of this democratic practice do not

derive from the circumstances of its founding but rather from a deep history of Jewish participatory politics. At the same time, it is sometimes judged to be a flawed democracy. The main challenge to the rule of democracy in Israel comes from security concerns and, even more, the unequal treatment of non-Jewish citizens. Successful integration of the Palestinian Arab community is the ultimate challenge to Israeli democracy. But despite some erosion in recent years, it is through existing, essentially democratic, practices and institutions that this challenge will be addressed.

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CHAPTER 6

ISRAEL'S WARS

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THE history of Israel is framed by wars. In fact, one way by which Israelis and scholars measure time in Israel is by the wars that have taken place throughout the years. This division of time reveals another fact: the nature of Israel's wars has changed over time. There have been two major changes in the nature and style of warfare Israel has engaged in, from 1948 to the most recent violent clash with Hamas (Operation Protective Edge in 2014): the first was the shift from mainly infantry-based warfare to modern armored warfare, or in the words of Israel Tal, from a personal-weapon warfare to collective weapons' warfare (Tal, 1996, p. 133). The second was the shift from conventional warfare, in which regular armies were involved, to clashes with nonstate combatants, which were engaged in what has come to be known in the professional literature as low intensity conflict (LIC). To complicate matters, Hamas and Hezbollah—nonstate entities—also possess certain features of ordinary armies, such as military formations and, more notably, modern rockets (more to Hezbollah, less to Hamas). Another development has been the changing face of the battlefield's boundaries. During the era of conventional warfare, warfare took place within a clear and well-defined territory, such as the Sinai Desert or the Golan Heights plateau. A related feature of this state of affairs was the relative separation between civilians and soldiers, whereby the battlefield was restricted mainly to military fighting forces, with no presence of civilians. The LIC era has blurred the battlefield boundaries. It is characterized by operations taking place in the streets of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, Gaza, and Han Yunis. On this battlefield civilians are deliberately targeted, and from among them fighting is carried out. With these changes, the meaning of victory has changed as well. The concept of a decisive military victory that marked the military campaigns of 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973 is no longer relevant on the LIC battlefield. The mere ability of Hezbollah and Hamas to continue launching rockets, for example, despite the barrage the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) inflicts upon them, is perceived as victory. Gaining of territory and destroying the enemy's military, the hallmark of victory during the days of the conventional wars, are much less important in a mode of fighting in which image and perception are more important than the physical and actual.

THE ORIGINS

The Israeli military that emerged from the 1948 Arab-Israeli war was infantry based in structure and conception. The 1948 IDF was the successor of the Haganah, the Yishuv¹ military arm. When the Israeli war of independence began in December 1947, the Haganah was comprised of general staff headed by a chief of staff, and nine brigades, one (the 8th) armored and the rest infantry. This structure doesn't tell the whole story, however. First, six of the brigades consisted of civilians, who up to this stage had received only partial and very basic military training in their free time, in the evenings and on weekends. Only the Haganah mobilized arm, three Palmach² brigades, consisted of full-time recruits, who were much better trained. Second, despite being organized in brigades, no Haganah force acted operationally above the company level. Third, the experience of the Haganah recruits—both full and part time—was in engaging with Palestinian semimilitias. The Haganah had no real combat experience in regular warfare. The 1948 war was the first significant and dramatic battlefield that the Haganah, which became the IDF, had experienced. As challenging as the task was for the Haganah/IDF, the 1948 war was quite primitive in contemporary Western terms. It was infantry-based war, in which the sides used a very small number of light tanks. The Syrian forces used fewer than a dozen light tanks, while the Egyptians had about forty tanks, most of them without barrels. The IDF armored brigade had eight tanks that went out of use the first time they were deployed on the battlefield (Tal, 2004a, pp. 157–165).

The IDF that came out of the war was naturally more skilled. Its commanders gained experience in large-scale planning and the execution of plans and in the operation of larger units; the largest military unit used during the later stages of the fighting was the division. The success of the IDF in thwarting the four Arab armies that invaded Israel (the Egyptian, Syrian, Iraqi, and Lebanese) was the result of several factors. First, the invading forces were acting separately, not under unified command as originally planned. The Jordanian Arab Legion did not invade the partition-lines' Israel, and despite several heavy military clashes between Israeli and Jordanian forces, the fighting on this front was contained. The Syrian and Iraqi forces ended their involvement in the fighting at a very early stage of the war, allowing the IDF to concentrate its efforts on a single front, the Egyptian. The IDF was fighting on an inner-lines battlefield; its high command could redeploy its forces swiftly and quickly, without hostile forces hindering the movement of forces from one front to another. These factors allowed the IDF to build a critical mass of forces when launching decisive attacks against the Egyptian forces during the autumn-winter 1948 final campaigns.

Second, the Arab armies, mainly Egypt's, did not put into the battlefield all of their available military forces. The Egyptian government, for example, sent an expedition force consisting of about forty thousand troops, about one-third of its military force. In total, the IDF put onto the battlefield a larger number of soldiers than all of the Arab armies involved in the war combined.

Third, the capabilities of the Israeli soldier were better than those of the Arab soldiers. The Israeli soldiers were trained to act as part of a unit, but also as individuals. That meant they could operate even if the chain of command were broken. The Arab soldiers lacked this quality, which proved crucial during the IDF offensives against the Egyptian forces in autumn 1948. Once the IDF managed to break the Egyptian defense line and to cut the chain of command, the Egyptian soldiers were lost, unable to continue fighting (Tal, 2004a, pp. 469–476).

When the war was over the IDF kept two of its brigades in active service, discharging the other nine brigades; the main IDF manpower was in the reserves. Structurally and doctrinally, the IDF remained infantry based. The few tanks the IDF purchased throughout the first half of the 1950s were integrated into infantry units. That is, the IDF did not use the tanks as a storm force, but as an auxiliary to the infantry units (Dayan, 1976, p. 111). It was this army that dealt with Israel's post-1948 security problems.

THE MIX: BASIC AND CURRENT SECURITY

When the war was over, Israel had to deal with two major security problems: the continued hostility of the Arab countries and the crossing of its borders by infiltrators from Lebanon, Jordan, and the Gaza Strip. These two problems were branded as basic and day-to-day or current security problems, respectively. Israel's basic security conception was based on the assumption that the Arabs did not accept their defeat in 1948 and were determined to resume the fighting once they were capable of doing so. David Ben-Gurion laid down the premises upon which Israel's strategic conception would be based, in preparation for an imminent war. First, Israel could not sustain long-duration fighting. Second, due to their geography and demography, the Arabs could sustain an unlimited number of military defeats, whereas for Israel, for the same reasons, the first defeat would also be the final one. Third, due to its small size and lack of strategic depth, Israel could not afford to sustain an Arab first strike, as even a small amount of territory lost would be critical. This problem became more acute because of the likely international response. One lesson of the first Arab-Israeli war was that the United Nations would interfere fairly rapidly to stop the hostilities, which might happen before Israel could regain territory lost in an Arab first strike (Ben-Gurion, 1998, pp. 214–215, 219–220). These considerations led Ben-Gurion to the conclusion that the IDF should strike first, and that the next war should take place on Arab territory. The operational meaning of this was that the IDF had endorsed a strategy and doctrine of offensive war as its cornerstone (Ben-Gurion, 1998, p. 142; see the chapters by Freilich and Peri in this volume). However, until June 1956 the IDF could not build its power in a way that would allow it to act in accordance with those strategic premises, as it had no access to major arms-procurement markets, where it could buy arms at will. It could buy only weapons left over from World War II, not the arms it needed. On the other hand, the Arab armies were not in better

shape, as they, too, had no access to major arms-procurement markets (Golan, 2000, pp. 210–227).

The second security problem Israel had to deal with during the first half of the 1950s was branded as current security: the infiltration of its territory by neighboring Arab countries, mainly from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Contemporary police and IDF reports indicated that until 1956 the primary motives of the infiltrators were civic or criminal; infiltrators tried to return to their homes (illegally, of course) or to recover property they had left behind. Others entered Israel to steal and rob. A very few of the infiltrators had political motives. It was the Israeli reaction that overlaid the infiltration phenomenon with a political dimension, since Israel linked the civic- and criminal-motivated infiltration to the broader Arab-Israeli context and to the country's political and security problems (Tal, 1998, pp. 6–41). This was evident in the fierce and uncompromising measures Israel used to stop the infiltration. Soldiers patrolled the borders, stopping the infiltrators usually by gunfire, regardless of their motives. From time to time IDF units crossed the border and launched attacks, branded as retaliation attacks, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to try to force the Jordanian and Egyptian governments to act firmly and seal the border. Until October 1953 the main target of the retaliation attacks was civilians. The rationale was that there was no point attacking military targets, as it was their mission to sustain such attacks, and doing so would raise no public reaction that would trigger governmental response. The Qibiya operation (October 14, 1953), during which the IDF demolished that village's houses, killing about seventy residents, was a turning point. The international reaction was overwhelming, and as a result, over the next few years the IDF acted only against military targets (Tal, 1998, pp. 83–84). As we shall see, Israel returned to attacking civilian targets later on.

The period of the retaliation attacks (1949–1956) ended in the 1956 Sinai War, but the latter was not the result of the former. Israel treated the infiltration problem as disconnected from the broader, basic security conception, and it made that point clear to its neighbors (Tal, 1996). The decision to go to war in 1956 was made due to strategic changes that had shaken the Middle East since 1954. Egypt's president Gamal Abed al-Nasser announced in September 1955 that Czechoslovakia had agreed to sell Egypt more than two hundred modern tanks and about one hundred jet fighters. The deal dramatically disrupted the arms balance between Israel and Egypt. Until then the military balance between Israel and the Arab states had been equal, and considering Israel's qualitative advantage, it was strong enough to meet any Arab military challenge. However, the Egyptian-Czech arms deal changed all that, as the Israelis had no equipment even close to what Egypt was about to receive from Czechoslovakia (Tal, 2004b, pp. 81–82). The immediate threat caused by this shift in the military balance in Israel's disfavor was mitigated in July 1956, when France agreed to sell Israel two hundred tanks and seventy-two combat jets. France's invitation to Israel to join it in fighting Egypt along with Britain, following Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal in July 1956, provided Israel with what Ben-Gurion thought was a unique opportunity to strike a blow against Israel's most dangerous enemy.

Since 1954 Nasser had presented himself as the leader of the Arab world, a pretension that worried Ben-Gurion. He was apprehensive about the emergence of an Atatürk style leader who would unite the Arab world and lead it on a crusade against Israel, and Nasser seemed to be that leader. As long as the Arab military forces were inferior to Israel's, the Israeli prime minister assumed that the danger was not imminent. However, with the arms deal that gave Nasser capabilities far exceeding Israel's, the emergence of a pan-Arab leader who would lead the Arab world in a war against Israel became a threatening possibility. And so, even when it managed to restore the arms balance, when France invited Israel in 1956 to join it in a war against Egypt, Ben-Gurion thought saw this as a unique opportunity to smash the Egyptian army under the umbrella of a great power and to stave off what he conceived of as an imminent threat (Tal, 2004b, pp. 81–82).

The 1956 war turned out to be a turning point in the short history of the IDF, as it demonstrated to the IDF high command the tank's power and capabilities. Under Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan, the IDF's war plans were based on the operation of the infantry unit, assisted by tanks. The new armored corps commander, Chaim Laskov, shifted the relations between the infantry and the tank, making the latter the IDF storm force. Thus, the tanks were the first to storm the Sinai, striking and defeating the Egyptian forces. With that, the IDF entered its mechanized phase (Golani, 1998, p. 609). With the lessons of the Sinai War, and with modern weapons in its possession, the IDF could build its power in accordance with Ben-Gurion's premises for Israel's security conception. During the decade from 1957 to 1967, the IDF was structured to achieve deterrence, and if that failed, decisive victory (in Hebrew: *Harta'a ve'Hakhra'a*). Therefore the IDF built its power in a way that should deter the Arabs from attacking Israel, but if deterrence failed and an Arab attack seemed imminent, the IDF would launch a decisive preemptive attack, aiming to destroy the enemy forces and conquer territory. The war would be fought on enemy territory and would be quick. To achieve these goals, the IDF based its power buildup on three facets: an effective intelligence force that would provide the IDF high command with intelligence about the enemy forces' deployment and the alert that would pave the way, if necessary, to preemptive attack; an effective air force that would first destroy the enemy's air force, depriving it of the ability to attack the Israeli rear, then assist the IDF ground troops; and a strong armored force that would destroy enemy formations and seize territory (Rabin, 1979 I, pp. 140–141).

The IDF buildup proved its effectiveness during the June 1967 war. Following the entry of massive Egyptian military forces into the Sinai and Nasser's decision on May 23 to reclose the Tiran Straits to Israeli shipping, the IDF acted in accordance with the plan it had been training on for nearly a decade. Based on accurate intelligence, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) struck on the morning of June 5, destroying within less than three hours the Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian, and Syrian air forces. Without the threat of the enemy air force, and with the close assistance of the IAF, the Israeli tanks crossed the Israeli-Egyptian border at 8:00 A.M. and stormed the Egyptians' military forces and positions, destroying their military power and conquering territory. With the progress of the IDF forces in the Sinai, due to Israel's inner lines of supply the IDF high command could

redeploy some of the forces from the south along the Jordanian front and later the Syrian front (Oren, 2002).

Within six days Israel's geostrategic environment had changed profoundly. For the first time in its short history, Israel's enemies were no longer literally within walking distance of the heart of the country. The occupation of the Sinai Desert, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights provided Israel with the strategic depth it had lacked. However, this geostrategic change did not lead to a conceptual change in Israel's military and strategic thinking, and Israel continued to act as if it did not have strategic depth. That is, the IDF continued to adhere to the same principles that were at the heart of Israel's military doctrine until 1967. Thus the IDF troops in the Sinai, more than two hundred miles away from Israel, still held front-line positions, exposing themselves to Egyptian attacks and raids across the Suez Canal. The war of attrition (March 1969–August 1970) that Nasser forced on Israel was possible mainly because of the way the Israeli forces were deployed, virtually on the banks of the Suez Canal.

The decision to build a defense line physically on the Suez Canal's banks was not made without a debate within the IDF. One school of thought, led by Major-General Ariel Sharon and Major-General Israel Tal, called for deploying the Israeli forces ten to twenty miles off the canal, while the IDF's deputy chief of staff, Haim Bar Lev, wanted to build a firm defense line on the Suez Canal's banks. The debate revolved around the question of which argument should prevail, the military or the political. Militarily, it was clear that a flexible defense line better suited the IDF. It would prevent immediate friction with the Egyptian forces on the other side of the canal on the one hand, and on the other, if the Egyptians decided to cross the canal and engage the IDF forces, due to their better performance in a maneuvering battle the Israeli soldiers would destroy the invading forces. At the same time, such a deployment would allow the Egyptian forces to conduct limited operations and to occupy a small strip of land on the east of the canal, an act that would have only symbolic, not military, value. The final decision was made based on the old Israeli premise, which dominated Israel's strategic thinking at the time, that Israel had no strategic depth; no piece of land should be surrendered. The political rationale overcame the military one, and the Israeli troops built a static defense line along the canal's banks. It was that decision that made it easier for Nasser to launch the war of attrition that cost Israel hundreds of soldiers (Adan, 1979, pp. 43–47).

The IDF defense plan for the Sinai against an Egyptian attack was also based on old-school premises, as it stipulated that in case of an attack, the IDF should counterattack immediately and repel the invading forces across the border. This was what scholars and pundits called "the cult of offense" that was so central to contemporary Israeli military and strategic thinking (Levite, 1988). The Israelis assumed that Sadat's decision to go to war would be based on pure military calculations, and that the Egyptian military would launch an all-out attack, aiming to reconquer the whole of the Sinai. The IDF commanders were confident that in such a scenario the Israeli forces would be able to thwart any Egyptian attack. The combination of all these factors led the IDF command to dismiss the threat of an Egyptian attack as unrealistic and remote.

Sadat, however, thought politically, not militarily. Since coming to power in 1970, Sadat had expressed his will to reach an agreement with Israel that would lead to the end of the belligerency between the two countries, in return for Israeli withdrawal from all the territories it had occupied in 1967. However, although he was ready to call such an agreement a peace agreement, he had some preconditions that Israel was not ready to accept. Israel demanded that a peace agreement include the normalization of the relationship between the two countries and the exchange of ambassadors. It also made some territorial demands but was ready to negotiate everything, even those demands. Sadat was not prepared to negotiate the terms of the peace agreement, and he certainly was not ready to discuss the terms of an agreement on a bilateral level. Like his predecessor, Nasser, Sadat refused to negotiate the return of the Sinai for peace under Israel's terms, arguing that such negotiations would be a diktat that would perpetuate the humiliation Egypt had sustained in 1967. Thus, Israel considered Sadat's terms a demand of full withdrawal for less than a full peace agreement.

Sadat's war plan aimed to accomplish political, not military goals. It meant to erase the humiliation suffered in 1967, which would allow him to negotiate with Israel as an equal. To do so, Sadat devised a plan aiming to achieve a limited territorial gain. His goal was capturing a five- to ten-mile strip on the east bank of the Suez Canal, held by the IDF. If possible the Egyptian forces would continue further east, but that was a secondary mission. To achieve that, a huge mass of Egyptian forces would cross the Suez Canal at many points. The small number of Israeli soldiers deployed in the outposts along the eastern banks of the Suez Canal made the task relatively easy. The IAF would be neutralized by the Egyptian surface to air missiles (SAMs). To dilute the ability of the IDF to mobilize all of its power against his forces, Sadat invited Syria's Hafez al Assad to join him in a surprise attack against Israel (Tal, 2016).

The case of the SAMs demonstrated the careful thinking of Sadat. He had learned well the lessons of the previous wars and knew that the Arab military advantage was in the buildup of an effective defense line, against the IDF advantage in maneuver warfare. Thus, the SAM batteries were deployed in such a way that each battery covered neighboring batteries; similarly, the storming Egyptian troops that crossed the Suez Canal on October 6, 1973, almost immediately built up a strong defense line across the strip of land they occupied. The IDF reaction to the surprise attack was almost automatic: despite their clear inferiority in numbers, all available IDF tanks counterattacked in an attempt to repel the Egyptian forces. However, the Egyptian defense line was unbreakable, and the very effective operation of the Egyptian SAM batteries practically paralyzed the Israeli combat jets that came to the rescue of the Israeli ground forces along the Suez Canal. The IDF high command would not consider the option of letting the Egyptian forces continue into the Sinai, to engage them there in maneuver warfare. Instead, during the first three days of fighting the IDF sent more and more tanks in a futile attempt to penetrate the Egyptian defensive line and to push them back to the west of the Suez Canal, as the IDF's pre-1967 war military doctrine called for. The Egyptian line proved impenetrable (Adan, 1979).

Israel deviated from its traditional war strategy in one thing: it did not launch a pre-emptive attack when it became clear that the Arab attack was imminent. Israeli intelligence had learned about the Egyptian plans on October 5, but Prime Minister Golda Meir declined the request of David Elazar, the IDF chief of staff, to launch an aerial pre-emptive attack. There were two reasons for this. First, the United States discouraged Israel from acting first, and US national security adviser Henry Kissinger was explicit in warning Israel not to do what it had done in 1967.³ Second, the Israelis were sure that even if bad would come to worse, the IDF would still be able to hit forcefully and crush the attacking forces.

The brilliance of Sadat's plan and the IDF's dedication to the offense cult are best demonstrated when compared to the way things occurred on the Israeli-Syrian front. Unlike Sadat, Syrian's Assad thought militarily, not politically. He sent his troops to take over all of the Golan Heights, and with that he exposed his forces to the qualitatively superior Israeli forces. These, despite their conspicuous numerical inferiority, and despite the severe hits they sustained, managed to inflict heavy casualties on the Syrian storming tanks, due to their much better conduct of maneuver warfare. When the IDF reserve forces joined the battlefield, the IDF managed to turn the tide. Within a few days the Syrian forces were repelled, and the Israeli tanks managed to gain back the territory lost in the first days of the war, as well as to occupy territories beyond the pre-October 1973 lines.

In the Sinai, after nearly two weeks of stalemate a breakthrough occurred when the IDF commanders managed to find a breach between two Egyptian divisions that had crossed the Suez Canal, leading to the Canal, which the Egyptians did not notice. The IDF managed to insert a large number of armored forces through the breach to the west bank. There, the IDF engaged the Egyptian forces in maneuver warfare. In the ensuing battles on Egyptian territory, the IDF tanks managed to occupy large territory, in the process putting the Egyptian third division, deployed east of the Suez Canal, under siege (Adan, 1979).

The 1973 war was the largest conventional war that took place between the IDF and the Arab armies, and the last. The Israelis and the Arabs put onto the battlefield the largest number of tanks in the history of the Arab-Israeli forces: Israel put on the battlefield (on both fronts) twenty-one hundred tanks, while Egypt deployed two thousand and Syria sixteen hundred (Nadal, 2006, p. 290). At the same time, it was the last war of its kind, and the peace accords Israel signed with Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994) reduced significantly the prospects of an Arab coalition gathering armed forces against Israel. Israel would use its tanks in the future, but it would no longer engage in armored warfare to such an extent. Its main challenge would change from basic to current security. The First Lebanon War (1982), to a great extent, foreshadowed the format of the military confrontations that would occupy the IDF in the coming years. Using a false pretext to attack the Palestinian forces that had found shelter in Lebanon after their deportation from Jordan in 1970 ("Black September"), Israel launched a full-scale military operation, invading Lebanon with ground and air forces. The goal was to expel the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leadership and forces from Lebanon and to force the

Lebanese government to sign a peace treaty with Israel. The war had elements of both conventional and unconventional warfare. The war against the PLO was a confrontation with guerrilla like forces. After forty days of war, the first goal was accomplished when the PLO agreed to leave Lebanon for Tunisia, while the second goal completely failed. During the fighting the IDF engaged the Syrian forces that were deployed in Lebanon in what was practically the last conventional engagement between the IDF and an Arab army. The war actually ended only in 2000, paving the way for the new kind of threat to Israel, which would lead to a change also in its mode of operation.

THE PREVALENCE OF CURRENT SECURITY PROBLEMS/LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

Following the 1956 war, the infiltration of Israel changed form. The civic/criminal infiltration had ended after the war, and the IDF had to deal with two different types of current security problems, old and new. The old one was the clashes along the Israeli-Syrian border that had started in the early 1950s, over Israel's right to cultivate the land in demilitarized zones along the two states' border, and since 1964, over the Syrian attempts to divert the sources of the river Jordan (Tal, 1998, pp. 115–136). The other source of friction was the support the Syrian government provided to a new/old actor in the Israeli-Arab conflict, the Palestinians.

After their defeat in 1948, the Palestinians hardly played a role in Arab politics and the Arab-Israeli conflict (see chapter by Sela in this volume). It was only in 1959, with the establishment in Cairo of a movement called Al Fath, which was dedicated to the liberation of Palestine and the termination of the state of Israel, that the Palestinians again took their fate into their hands. Other Palestinian groups were formed, representing various social and political agendas but all sharing the same goal: the liberation of Palestine. In 1964 the Arab league established the PLO, which became really Palestinian only in 1968, when Yasser Arafat, who headed Al Fath, became its head. Dedicated to an armed struggle against Israel, the Palestinians had started their struggle against Israel using terror methods. The first Palestinian (futile) attack took place on January 1, 1965, and Israel had to deal, once again, with infiltration from neighboring Arab countries, mostly Jordan and Syria. This time, though, the infiltrators' goal was a military campaign against Israel. The Palestinians were realistic enough to know that their operations would not destroy Israel. Their goal was to keep the Palestinian problem alive and to trigger an all-out war between Israel and its neighbors, hoping that a united Arab world would assemble its military power to bring an end to the Jewish state (Arnon-Ohana & Yodfat, 1985; see chapter by Rabinovich in this volume).

The Palestinians certainly achieved the first goal, and to some extent their second goal also. The clashes along the Israeli-Syrian border, which were partly the result of the Palestinian terror attacks against Israel and Israel's reaction to these attacks, set in

motion a process of escalation that resulted in the Six-Day War in 1967. With that, current security and basic security converged. The results of the 1967 war led to the beginning of a new kind of warfare, attrition warfare, that was conducted along the Israeli-Egyptian and the Israeli-Palestinian fronts. The fighting along the Suez Canal has been discussed previously. The Israel-Palestinian attrition warfare was conducted by infiltrators and militias that either crossed the border to carry out terror attacks in Israel or in Israel-held territories, or shelled Israeli border settlements from Jordan. Israel's modes of response had common features in both cases, that of massive and disproportionate response, which in some respects resembled Israel's retaliation attacks until 1953.

As previously mentioned, the international reaction to the large number of civilians killed by the IDF unit during the Qibiyah operation forced the IDF to turn to attacks against military bases. After the 1956 war the IDF returned to attacking civic targets, but aimed mainly against property and infrastructure, refraining from killing civilians. The IDF used this method more forcefully after the 1967 war, in response to continuous terror attacks emanating from Jordan, and against Egypt. The attacks against Jordan aimed to force the authorities to stop the infiltration of Israel and the shelling of Israeli settlements by Palestinians from across the border. The most conspicuous examples of the IDF mode of operation were the IDF raid and demolition in December 1968 of two bridges on a road leading to Amman and the shelling and destruction of the Jordanian irrigation system in the Jordan Valley in 1969 and 1970. The IDF commander of the northern command explained that this mode of operation aimed "to make life bearable to us, and unbearable to them" (Bartov, 1978, I, 153; Dayan, 1976, p. 538; Drori, 2012, pp. 233–236).

The same massive-attack method was used against Egypt on a larger scale. Seeking to force Nasser to end the attrition war along the Suez Canal, in October 1969 IDF artillery destroyed the refineries near the city of Suez. Later that month Israeli airborne forces destroyed a bridge across the Nile and a dam and electric transmission line along the Aswan-Cairo high power line. In January 1970 the IAF began bombing infrastructure targets deep inside Egypt. The escalation in the Israeli response led to massive evacuation of civilians from the cities along the Suez Canal and in Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez, and these became "ghost" cities (Dayan, 1976, pp. 515–519). The August 1970 Israeli-Egyptian ceasefire, brokered by the United States, ended the Israeli and Egyptian attacks.

The IDF continued and even increased its practice of massive retaliation with the further changes in the face of warfare. The changes were in the nature of the enemy and the threats. Regarding the nature of the enemy, the Palestinians, and especially Hezbollah—which emerged as a military force in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982—were nonstate entities, which meant that victory and success in the battlefield would no longer be achieved through the destruction of the enemy's military power and the occupation of its territory (Winograd Committee, 2008, p. 272). Regarding the nature of the threat, this had changed with the introduction of rockets into the Arab-Israeli conflict front. Until 1991 the Israeli civic centers were rarely hit during Israel's conventional wars. Israeli border settlements were the target of attacks throughout the years, but Israel's cities remained, with few exceptions, immune from enemy fire (other

than terror attacks). That had changed in 1991. During the First Gulf War (August 1990–February 1991), the Iraqi army launched about forty Scud missiles toward Israel's population centers. For the first time in its history, Tel Aviv was hit by rockets. The attacks marked the entry of a new kind of weapon into Israel's enemies' military arsenal: long- (and short-) range rockets. Hezbollah and later the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip endorsed this method and attacked Israel with rockets.

Another change of a different kind in the nature of battle that the IDF had to adjust to was the Palestinian intifadas, the first of which started on December 8, 1987, and the second in October 2000. The intifadas, during which the Palestinians used a mixture of nonviolent, or at least nonlethal, means of resistance and terror attacks, posed a different kind of threat to Israel (see the chapter by Barak in this volume). While belonging to the category of current security, the intifadas were different from the other current security modes of conflict because they involved the civic population under occupation. The struggle against the intifadas raised three issues for the IDF that had been absent from past wars. The first two were the place of morality in war and the notion of choice in going to war, or to use legal terms, *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bellum*—that is, the conditions under which states may use their armed forces and the way the war is conducted. The third was the fact that the IDF was engaged in police missions against civilians.

The discussion over these issues had started earlier, following the 1982 Lebanon war. Until then Israeli society had commonly accepted that all the wars Israel had been involved in since 1948 were justified, as they were wars of no choice, and the Israeli public justified the wars and the resultant sacrifices as an inevitable price necessary to secure the very existence of Israel. Following the 1982 war, and more so after the eruption of the Palestinian intifadas, Israelis questioned the justification of the use of power by the IDF and the methods it used. The IDF ethos, inherited from the Haganah, was that the IDF soldier should avoid using his arms in an unlawful manner—that is, avoid using his arms against uninvolved civilians or against prisoners of war (Chazan, 2009). This ethos is known in Hebrew as *Tohar Ha'Neshek* (purity of arms), a euphemism for *jus in bellum*. The changing nature of warfare, from conventional to nonconventional and LIC; the intifadas and the resulting blurring of the lines of the battlefield, with the presence of civilians on the battlefield; the gradual development of the massive retaliation doctrine; and the development of the practice dubbed “targeted killing” or, in IDF rhetoric, “targeted frustration,” attacks aiming against suspected terrorists all brought into question the justification of the IDF methods on the (new) battlefield and the IDF morality and adherence to *jus in bellum*, the purity of arms.

The IDF used the practice of targeted killing against Palestinian leaders, as well as to stop what was called “ticking bombs.” In the first case, while revenge should not be ruled out, the major rationale behind the attacks was the assumption that killing leaders and operatives would disrupt the terror activities of the assassinated leader's organization; that is, it was a preemptive measure, but one lacking the immediacy associated with the doctrine of preemptive attack. In the second case, following the 1993 Oslo Accords, the Israeli security forces were unable to detain a would-be perpetrator or his dispatcher within the territories under the control of the Palestinian Authority (PA). As the PA did

not fulfill its obligation to take active measures to prevent terror attacks against Israel and to arrest and extradite perpetrators of terror attacks, it was Israel's duty to take necessary measures to defend its citizens against Palestinian terrorism, and the targeted killing was one of the means Israel used to achieve that goal. According to the Israeli human rights group B'tselem, 339 Palestinians were killed in targeted attacks from 2000 to 2006, 129 of them bystanders (Luft, 2003; Tal, 2007).

The IDF had continued to use the method originated in the 1950s, massive retaliation, in response to attacks carried out against it from outside of Israel's territory, mainly from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip and Lebanon. As it was impossible to defeat either Hamas or Hezbollah by destroying its forces and conquering territory, the goal was "bringing about a change in consciousness among the enemy's decision-makers" (Winograd Committee, 2008, p. 272). The commander of the Israeli northern command, General Gadi Eisenkot, explained in 2008: "I call it the Dakhia doctrine. What happened at the Dakhia area in Beirut in 2006 will happen in every village from which fire would be launched against Israel. We will use disproportional power, and will cause horrendous damage and demolition. [...] We have the power to do so. [...] Hezbollah understands very well that firing from villages will bring about their destruction" (Fishman & Ringel-Hoffman, 2008).

This IDF massive and excessive retaliation method was based on the use of fire over maneuver warfare. The IDF had concentrated on the creation of a mass of weapons fire to influence the enemy's consciousness and willpower through the massive use of artillery and air bombardment, instead of using ground forces that would seize territory and destroy the enemy's military forces (Winograd Committee, 2008, p. 272). This was the logic behind the IDF attacks on Hamas from 2004 to 2014, during which the IDF launched seven major operations in the Gaza Strip.⁴ The same method and logic were behind the Israeli major attacks on Hezbollah and Lebanon in July 1993 (Operation Accountability) and July 2006 (the Second Lebanon War). In the struggle against the two nonstate entities, the IDF used massive artillery, both ground and aerial, aiming to inflict heavy damage on military and civilian infrastructure. Ground forces were used sparingly, and only at the external lines of the battlefield. The goal was to put heavy pressure on the Hamas and Hezbollah leaders to stop the launching of rockets against Israel.

The efficacy of the Dakhia doctrine is a subject of controversy. Critics of the doctrine question its legality and morality. It was impossible to avoid hitting civilians, and Israeli spokesmen put the blame for the damage and casualties on Hamas and Hezbollah leaders' shoulders, justifying the casualties as "collateral damage." The proponents of the Dakhia doctrine point to the calm along Israel's borders with Lebanon and Hamas, the result of the use of the doctrine in 2006 and 2014, respectively. In essence, this notion is based on David Ben-Gurion's argument that there was asymmetry in Israel's and the Arabs' goals in the conduct of war. The Arabs' goal was to inflict one devastating blow that would destroy Israel. Israel's goal was to survive the Arabs' repeated attacks long enough for them to realize that they could not defeat Israel; only then would they accept Israel's existence (Ben-Gurion, 1998, pp. 219–221). This rationale re-emerges when weighting the meaning of the Israeli campaigns against the Palestinians and Hezbollah—

each campaign can be seen as a link in a chain that might lead, eventually, to the recognition by the enemy of the futility of its attacks against Israel. Thus, the interwar period is not only a time preparing for the next round, but also a link in the chain that might lead to compliance and content. Or more realistically in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it might lead to a shift from armed struggle to diplomacy (see the chapter by Freilich in this volume).

NOTES

1. The Jewish organized community in Palestine during the Mandate years.
2. Hebrew acronym for storm companies.
3. Telcon: Minister Ariyeh Shalev from Henry Kissinger, October 6, 1973, 6:55 A.M., Digital National Security Archives.
4. September 2004, Days of Repentant; September 2005, First Rain; June 2006, Summer Rains; February 2008, Warm Winter; December 2008–January 2009, Cast Lead; October 2012, Pillar of Defense; and July 2014, Protective Edge.

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PART II

ISRAELI SOCIETY

CHAPTER 7

SOCIOPOLITICAL CLEAVAGES IN ISRAEL

URI RAM

CLEAVAGES are deep—persistent and resilient—social divisions, which have substantial political consequences. The cleavage model originated with Karl Marx’s view of politics as a manifestation of class struggle and was expanded in the 1960s by Stein Rokkan and Seymour M. Lipset into a broader research program (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). They reasoned that since the nineteenth century there had emerged in western Europe a common “structure of social cleavages,” that it resulted from “critical socio-political transformations,” and that it produced “path dependent” political outcomes. They referred especially to two “critical transformations”—the rise of the nation-state and the Industrial Revolution—and hence mainly to two types of confrontation: one of the center versus the periphery (national elites versus ethnic, religious, regional sectors, etc.) and the other among contending classes (bourgeois versus aristocrats, employers versus workers, etc.).

Up until the 1970s, the common image of Israel had been that of a homogeneous nation, or at least of a well-integrated one. The social-scientific “melting pot” perspective of national integration followed the Zionist ideological staple of the “gathering of exiles” (the exemplary stance was provided by Eisenstadt, 1967). It was only beginning in the late 1970s that challenging perspectives evolved, which turned the limelight on fractures based on nationality, culture, class, ethnicity, and other fault lines and on their conflict potentialities. During that time antagonism among various social groups came into the open and was politicized. In contradistinction to the mainstream view were presented an ethno-class perspective (Swirski, 1981), a pluralist perspective (Smoocha, 1978), and other accounts of social divergence. By the 1990s the view of Israel as a society ripped by cleavages had gathered momentum. Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak (1989) contended that the “center” of Israel was becoming “overburdened” by the demands put upon it by the “peripheries” or “sub-centers.”

By the 2000s even Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, the doyen of Israeli sociology and chief promoter of the nation-building perspective, became concerned about symptoms of

social disintegration. He diagnosed processes of heterogenization and pluralization and raised the question of whether integrative forces might still prevail. "Alongside the evolvement of heterogeneity...can there strive in society something common or homogenizing, and if so what is it? Are there still any institutional and symbolic common frameworks, except for the formal and organized ones? Can a commitment to a wide framework persist alongside the development of heterogeneous interests and individualistic attitudes? And if so, what would be the nature of such framework, which cannot be as homogenous as it used to be?" (Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 90).

Sociologist Baruch Kimmerling, a rebellious former student of the nation-building school, expounded a fully fledged alternative cleavages view of Israeli society. He analyzed the decline of the hegemony of the labor movement's historical elite and the rise of a multicultural or plural society. Modeling it on the American acronym WASPs (white Anglo-Saxon Protestants), which refers to the pioneering American elite, Kimmerling coined the Hebrew acronym Ahusalim to describe the Israeli pioneering elite. The term is composed from the first letters of the Hebrew words for the following adjectives: Ashkenazim (of European descent), veterans, secular, socialists, and nationalists (Kimmerling, 2001). Kimmerling depicted a sort of plural and conflict mirror image view of society to that of the consensus paradigm. The pivot of his analysis is "the failed attempt to form political hegemony and a homogenous culture in Israel and the actual formation of a state characterized by a plurality of cultures," to which he also refers as "tribes" (Kimmerling, 2004, p. 11).

The main "tribes" in his account, in addition to the previously mentioned Ahusalim, are the national-religious sector, the ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) sector, the traditional Mizrahi sector (Masortim), the "Russian" sector (new Jewish and semi-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union, who number more than 1 million), the "Ethiopian" sector (new Jewish immigrants from Ethiopia; who number about 150,000), the Arab sector in Israel (close to 2 million people), and to some extent labor immigrants. In Kimmerling's expression, Israel transmuted from a centripetal to a centrifugal society. Despite this, he found that two commitments still bind the majority of society: Judaism and the military. A third pillar of Israel's "civil religion" is the Holocaust memory (Auron, 2012). These pillars are of course also the very instruments of exclusion of those who are deemed not to belong to the dominant nation.

In their comprehensive analysis of cleavages in Israeli society, Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled (2002) offer a triadic model of citizenship. According to this model, there is in Israel a compound regime of incorporation, which is composed of three distinct "discourses of citizenship." First is a republican Zionist discourse, by which status is allocated according to "contribution to the common good." This is the discourse that allocates the highest status to the group that Kimmerling dubbed Ahusalim, the veteran Ashkenazi sector. Second is an ethnic discourse, by which positions are allocated according to an ascriptive principle of group belonging. This discourse elevates Jews above Arabs. Third is a civic liberal meritocratic discourse that allots equal individual rights to all citizens. The relative mixture of the different components depends on changing circumstances and the balance of power among the groups in society.

By the 2000s the theory of cleavages had thus become a new convention.¹ In 2015 it received an endorsement from no less than the president of the State of Israel, Reuven Rivlin, and hence it is being promoted now as the new mainstream perspective in Israeli social sciences.

Since 2015 President Rivlin has presented in public an unequivocal “cleavages paradigm” of Israeli society, according to which “the old Israeli order” has by now reached its limits and “a new Israeli order” is emerging. He bases this proclamation on some basic demographic data and forecasts: “During the 1990s’ . . . Israeli society was composed of a clear and solid majority, with minority groups alongside it; a great mainstream Zionist majority, and alongside it three minorities: a religious-national minority, an Arab minority and an ultra-Orthodox minority. This picture might have frozen in the perception of the public, of the media and the political system. But reality meanwhile has changed essentially” (Rivlin, 2015). And he added, “In this order Israeli society is composed of four major sectors, or, otherwise put, four ‘tribes,’ essentially different from each other, which are becoming roughly of the same size. Whether or not one wishes it, the ‘structure of ownership’ of Israeli society and the state of Israel is changing in front of our eyes” (Rivlin, 2015).

Having reviewed in a nutshell the evolution of the cleavages perspective in Israel and its interpretations, let us turn now to a sociohistorical overview of four major cleavages and their impact on politics. The order of presentation of the cleavages is by the degree of their severity (or “strength”) in the public view: (1) the national cleavage, Israeli Jews versus Palestinian Arabs (53 percent of the public consider it the “strongest” cleavage); (2) the cultural cleavage, secular Jews versus religious ones (10.5 percent); (3) the socio-economic (or class) cleavage, rich versus poor (or center versus periphery) (8 percent); and (4) the ethnic cleavage, Ashkenazi Jews versus Mizrahi Jews (“Westerners” versus “Orientals”) (4 percent) (Harmann et al., 2017, p. 213).

THE NATIONAL CLEAVAGE: ISRAELI JEWS VERSUS PALESTINIAN ARABS

The national enmity between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs is the most prolonged and acute sociopolitical cleavage in Israel. In contemporary Israel (within the “Green Line” borders of 1949), there is a total population of 8.6 million people, of which Palestinian Arabs compose a relatively large minority of close to 21 percent (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017a).² The social and cultural boundaries between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs are almost impermeable. The two collectivities adhere to different religions (Islam [Sunni] and Christianity [mostly Greek Orthodox]) in the Arab case, versus Judaism); they study in separate schools and in different languages (Arabic versus Hebrew); and they reside in separate quarters and practice a very strict endogamy. Jews and Arabs intermingle in the public sphere, especially in the mixed cities (Akre,

Beer Sheva, Haifa, Jaffa, etc.) and in the labor market, but usually they do not intermix socially. There are tense relations and widespread animosity between Jews and Arabs in Israel. Among the Jewish majority, Arabs are often considered an “internal enemy” and citizens of a lesser degree. Among the Arab minority, Jews are often considered colonizers and oppressors.³

The national cleavage has endured for more than a hundred years, with periodic violent eruptions. It pivots around the national right to the territory of Palestine-Israel, to which both nations claim ancestry entitlement while delegitimizing that of their adversary (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2009). It is the most acrimonious cleavage, because it is the only one that takes place between protagonists who consider each other exterior to their own collective identity and as a threat to their very existence.

The critical transformation that initiated the national cleavage was the Zionist immigration to Palestine and its settlement, which began in the 1880s. Yet until World War I the conflict was mostly latent. Explicit signs of national antagonism emerged following Britain’s conquest of Palestine in 1917 and its declared intention to promote a “national Jewish home” there (the Balfour Declaration).

The British Mandate over the country, which lasted from 1920 to 1948, facilitated the immigration and colonization activity of the Jewish community and its further institutionalization (less so in the last decade of the Mandate). This provoked Arab reaction, which was expressed in violent clashes in 1921, 1929, and more broadly in the Arab Revolt of 1936–1939, which were put down by British troops. The Jewish community grew apace, from 85,000 on the eve of World War I to 600,000 on the eve of Israel’s War of Independence in 1948. When the British left Palestine, armies from Arab states invaded Israel, and war broke out. This turned out to be the second and most critical turn in Jewish–Arab relations.

Some 700,000 Palestinians either were expelled or escaped from the country, so that by the end of the war the Palestinians became a minority of 15 percent within the Jewish state. The territories of the state offered to them by the League of Nations were ripped apart by Israel, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. While at the beginning of the war Jews owned only some 7 percent of the country’s territory, by its end the state possessed some 93 percent of the land under its jurisdiction. Some local Arabs remained in mixed towns, but most were segregated in their own villages. Even though they received Israeli citizenship, a military administration was imposed on them, and the confiscation of lands and overall discrimination persisted. While the state opened its gates to world Jewry (the Law of Return), the right of return of Palestinian refugees was denied and blocked (Rouhanna & Huneidi, 2013; Yiftachel, 2006).

Given the devastation of the Nakba they experienced (Disaster; the Palestinian appellation for the 1948 war), the military regime, the dispersion of their elites, and their isolation from the rest of the Arab world across the borders, the Palestinians in Israel were almost entirely subjugated to the state’s power. Politically they had been contained by patronage electoral lists set up by the ruling Zionist parties, which were led by traditional heads of local municipalities and extensive families (Hamulla) (Ghanem, 2001).

In 1966 the military administration was lifted. Yet in June 1967 another major Arab–Israeli war broke out and ushered in yet another critical turn. As an outcome of this war Israel got control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which today have, respectively, 2.5 and 2 million Palestinian inhabitants, many of them refugees from 1948 or their descendants. The meeting of Israel’s Palestinians with their co-nationals in the occupied territories and with their national movement (shaped since the 1960s by the Palestine Liberation Organization) generated a renewed “Palestinization” of their identity. Yet they also further integrated and acculturated in Israeli society (even though in an inferior social status) and hence simultaneously underwent significant “Israelization” of their daily habits (Smootha, 2017).

The intifada, the uprising of the Palestinians in the occupied territories that broke out in 1987, wrought further “radicalization” of Palestinian nationalism across the two sides of the “Green Line.” A rapprochement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in the early 1990s brought a certain relief of the national tension. Yet the failure of the Oslo process of 1993 (following the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 and a blitz of Palestinian terror attacks on Israeli civilians), the continuous intrusive Jewish settlement of the Palestinian territories, and the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000 dashed hopes for Israeli–Palestinian conciliation.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, both Jewish and Palestinian nationalism became radicalized. On both sides hate discourse, delegitimization of the other, and extreme politics became pervasive (cf. Bar-Tal & Schnell, 2012). In Palestinian politics in Israel, radicalization is expressed in the success of new nationalist parties (especially Ballad) and to a certain extent of the Islamic movement (Haklai, 2011). They demand the de-Zionization of Israel and its transmutation into a binational state (as expressed in the “Vision Documents” articulated by Arab civil society organizations in 2007; Ozacky-Lazar & Kabha, 2008).

The fate of Arab representation in Israeli politics is typical of the Arabs’ ambiguous status in Israel. Formally, Arab citizens take part in the parliamentary game, yet as a matter of fact independent Arab parties are not considered as partners for ruling coalitions (with one exception in 1992), so that they are barred from the executive branch of government. By and large, in recent years, while on the everyday level Palestinian Arabs in Israel have undergone substantial Israelization, on the political level both Jewish and Arab societies in Israel have undergone radical nationalization of their adversarial identities (Ben-Rafael & Peres, 2005, p. 167–186; Shafir & Peled, 2002, pp. 110–136).

THE CULTURAL CLEAVAGE: SECULAR VERSUS RELIGIOUS JEWS

The cultural cleavage divides secular (or “nonreligious”) Jews and religious ones, as well as some intermediary categories, over the meaning of Jewish identity in Israel, its rules

of inclusion, and its daily implementation (Ben-Rafael & Peres, 2005, pp. 61–106; Shafir & Peled, 2002, pp. 137–157).

Along a continuum of religiosity, Jews in Israel are commonly sorted into the following four categories or some variation thereof: secular (Hilonim), traditional (Masortim), religious (Datim), and ultra-Orthodox (Haredim). Yet these are not formal distinctions, and there is no official registry of these categories. The Central Bureau of Statistics finds that 42 percent of the Jewish population define themselves as secular, 12 percent as religious, 13 percent as traditional religious, 25 percent as traditional not very religious, and 8 percent as ultra-Orthodox (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010).⁴

Such surveys are based on self-identifications and yield circumscribed categories, while in fact there is a gradual sequence with blurred zones, depending on the benchmarks used. Faith and behavioral criteria, for instance, yield great differences, and so do various more specific criteria within each type. Perhaps the most straightforward distinction along the religiosity spectrum is the attitude to religious laws (Halachic inscriptions). A Pew survey indicates that an overwhelming proportion of Haredim (92 percent) and three-quarters of Datim (75 percent) say observing Halakha is essential to being Jewish, compared with fewer than half of Masortim (42 percent) and just 9 percent of Hilonim (Pew Research Center, 2016b).

The historical roots of the religious-secular quarrel go back to eighteenth-century Europe and the beginning of the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskala), which drew Jewish culture away from Halacha to modernity (Ben-Rafael & Ben-Chaim, 2006). Later, in the nineteenth century, the stream of Haskala turned into trends of Jewish acculturation, secularization, and in part assimilation among the surrounding nations. Such processes were more common in western and central Europe, where Jews were offered “emancipation” (from their corporate medieval status) and integration, and obviously in America.

The rise of the Zionist movement (officially from 1897) augured a new national and secular meaning for collective Jewish identity, which defied the traditional tenets of diasporic Jewish identity: faith, community, and rabbinic authority. Later, in 1948, the creation of the state, with a monopoly over the determination of identity (attached to the granting of citizenship privileges), further sharpened and politicized the questions “Who is a Jew?” (or “What is a Jew?”) and how Jewish the Israeli public sphere must be.

A pragmatic compromise was reached (the famous “Status Quo Settlement”), by which the state respects Sabbath and the Jewish holidays, a kosher Jewish diet is served in the army, and marital and burial matters are delegated to rabbinic authority (as well as to the other religious authorities, Muslim and Christian).⁵ Later a bill was added that defined persons eligible for the Law of Return somewhat differently from the strict rabbinical definition of Jewishness (A. Cohen & Susser, 2000).

Each and every aspect of the Status Quo has been, and still is, challenged by groups who wish to enhance their worldview and lifestyle; secular circles demand more leniency on the part of the state in religious matters, while religious circles demand more strict imposition of Judaism on its part (Ben-Porat, 2013). Yet, and more important, since the 1970s the pivot of secular-religious relations has shifted from matters of observation of Halachic prescriptions to matters of national identity and politics. This

occurred in tandem with the decline in the hegemony of secular nationalism and the rise of religious nationalism to replace it (Kimmerling, 2001; Ram, 2008).

It is important therefore to distinguish between the political attitudes of each major religious trend toward the Zionist movement and toward modern Jewish nationality at large, and their transformation over time, especially around the 1970s. Historically, all three religious trends—ultra-Orthodox, traditional, and religious—were reserved about Zionism or even hostile to it. But as the twentieth century progressed, each trend was incorporated into it and adapted to it in a distinct pace and manner, especially following the two “critical events” of the Holocaust and the establishment of the state (for the sake of brevity we discuss the trends very generally, disregarding internal variability).

Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) communities are unique in Jewish Israel in the level of their self-imposed enclosure and segregation. They live in their own distinct neighborhoods and marry within themselves, have their own separate educational systems and mass media, obey strict kosher prescriptions and dress according to their own codes, and have their own spiritual authorities and political parties (historically Agudat Yisrael, recently Yahadut HaTorah). To some extent Haredim and secular Israelis mingle in the public sphere and in the labor market, but they rarely engage socially with each other. Some Haredi communities are also unique in the level of their ideological hostility to Zionism and their avoidance of military service. After the passage of governmental power from the Left to the Right in 1977 and the concomitant noticeable reframing of the state as “Jewish” (rather than “Israeli”), the Haredi sector became closer to the state (as well as to the occupation) ideologically.

The categories of traditional (Masortim) and religious (Datim) Jews are more diffused socially and culturally and do not have discernible political representation. Their affiliates tend to lend their support to religious parties, but also to nonreligious ones. Throughout the twentieth century religious Jews turned to acceptance of Zionism on pragmatic grounds, without attributing to it religious significance (Ravitzky, 1996). By and large they have been, and still are, represented by the national-religious parties (historically the Mizrahi movement, later the Mafdal, and recently the Jewish Home Party). Yet during the 1970s this sector underwent an internal conversion. While until then it had acted under the wings of Labor Zionism (and was even more moderate on national issues), following the wars of 1967 and 1973 its youth adopted a messianic outlook about the return of the Jewish people to the “Land of Israel” and turned the party into the vanguard of Jewish nationalism and of the settlement of the occupied territories (the Gush Emunim settlement movement was its offshoot). As such, it became a “natural” coalition partner to the Likud governments (and in these governments it occupies the extreme nationalist pole). The settlement of the West Bank with tens of Jewish communities peopled by 400,000 settlers created a distinct national-religious community, with its own educational institutions, its own subculture, and at times its own paramilitary militias (as well as growing authority inside the army; cf. Levy, 2015). Settlers and their supporters occupy various strategic economic and military positions, from which they exert direct influence on daily policy and on the political drift of the country at large (Shafir & Peled, 2002).

Since the 1980s another “natural partner” in nationalist coalitions (though occasionally also in Labor coalitions) has been the Shas Party (Sephardic Guardians of Tora). Shas represents a mixture of a low-income, traditional Mizrahi constituency and a newly created ultra-Orthodox Mizrahi leadership. For symbolic reasons and due to its spawning of a clientelist educational and welfare network (subsidized by the state), Shas became identified with “the people” on the peripheries and the impoverished neighborhoods in the big cities. Ideologically, it rejects the Israeli ethos of the secular Ashkenazi elite and reformulates Israeli identity in the language of Jewish nationalism.

The result of the changes in religious identities since 1967–1977 is a growing outright coalescence between religiosity and nationalist politics. The cultural cleavages thus deeply affect Israeli politics (Shafir & Peled, 2002).⁶

THE SOCIOECONOMIC (CLASS) CLEAVAGE: RICH VERSUS POOR

The class cleavage is shaped by the division of wealth in society. There are two major approaches to it: *stratification*, which refers to individuals aggregated by their market “life chances” (the Weberian approach); and *class*, which refers to historical structural categories defined by their economic functions and interests (the Marxian approach; cf. Wright, 2009).

In a *longue durée* perspective, the “critical turn” that shaped the fundamentals of the socioeconomic structure of Israel was the rise to power of the Labor movement in the pre-state Jewish community in the 1930s and its subsequent shaping of the social structure until well into the 1970s. Beginning in the 1920s this movement hoisted an ideological banner of communal settlement and national development, supported by public means. Yet in practice the communal collectivities (*kibbutzim*) comprised only a fraction of society, while the main economic activity took place in the much larger urban economy. Nevertheless, the pre-state colonial Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine (1920–1948) was relatively poor and relatively equal. It was largely a society of settlers and refugees, sponsored by Jewish resources from abroad. Finance was nationally pooled and then allocated locally by political agencies well organized around a self-governing center; this was the genesis of the corporatist regime of Israel (Horowitz & Lissak, 1989; Krampf, 2018; Shalev, 1992).

Between the 1950s and 1970s the initial corporatist regime turned into a developmental state corporatism, wherein the government and the Histadrut Federation of Labor—both controlled by the ruling Mapai Party—monitored economic development as well as the distribution of wealth, with the consent of a weaker third partner in the form of the private sector. A major outcome of the great influx of immigration of the 1950s and 1960s was the division of society into two large-scale ethno-classes: a new working class,

largely consisting of Mizrahi immigrants, who had been allocated to lower socioeconomic positions in newly created peripheral townships and moshavim (agricultural settlement), and a new managerial-professional class, largely consisting of Ashkenazi veterans, employed by the state or public agencies or in free professions in the urban centers (Swirski, 1981). This brought about the phenomenon of “social gaps” between the then-called “First Israel” and “Second Israel” (a “Third Israel” was the Arab sector) during the 1960s and 1970s.

As a result of the wars of 1967 and 1973, both state and public enterprises and private businesses prospered. The occupation of the new territories (the Sinai Peninsula, West Bank, and Syrian Heights), which were much larger than the state’s original size, propelled economic expansion, while the boycott of armament shipments by Western powers instigated the expansion of Israel’s publicly owned military industry. These changes, together with the influx of a cheap Palestinian labor force, made for palpable upward social mobility. Simultaneously, in order to pacify militant Mizrahi protest, welfare policies were enhanced. Nevertheless, in 1977 the Labor regime lost the general elections and came to its end, and the Likud national-liberal party came to power. Under it the economic boom reached an inflationary acceleration that got out of hand, and in 1983 a crisis of the financial system ensued.

The crisis led to the enforcement of the Economic Stabilization Plan of 1985, which halted the inflationary spiral and in the same stroke implanted a turn toward a neoliberal restructuring of the economy (Filc & Ram, 2004; Shafir & Peled, 2002). The “new economy” entailed high rates of growth, and with a gross domestic income per capita (the national income divided by the population) of US\$37,000, Israel joined the ranks of the world’s developed countries (World Bank, 2017).⁷ Yet the rates of economic growth and of the rise of wages parted ways—to the latter’s disadvantage (Kristal, 2014; Swirski & Konor-Atias, 2016, p. 6).

The fruits of neoliberal, globally enhanced economic growth have not spread evenly across society. The major beneficiary had been a small financial elite (the “tycoons”), which runs Israeli business conglomerates, the hi-tech sector, and the free professions.⁸ The losers in the new economy include employees of labor-intensive industries—especially in the northern and southern peripheries of the country, where “traditional” plants have closed shop one after the other (Bar-On, 2013; Ram, 2007)—as well the new “precariat” employees, whose jobs are part-time, low paid, and easily disposable.⁹

The changes in the economic structure have been accompanied by a transformation of the welfare state, from a European universalist model—especially in the spheres of education, health, and housing—to the American model of provision for the needy (Gal & Benish, 2018). Overall, the new economy has made for a concentration of wealth in the upper stratum (the upper fifth of the population obtains 44 percent of all income), the reproduction of impoverishment of the lower strata (one-fifth of the population subsists under the poverty line), and tighter stress on the middle classes (Ram, 2007; Ram & Filc, 2016; Shafir & Peled, 2002, pp. 231–259).

Stratification and class cleavages are associated with the other identity cleavages discussed in this chapter. Inequality and poverty are not “color-blind”; they are rather fairly correlated with sociocultural categories. One datum that illustrates this is the ratio between the average monthly incomes of individuals affiliated with different sectors and the national average. It emerges that the average monthly income of an Ashkenazi individual is 31 percent higher than the average monthly income of all employees, and a Mizrahi’s income is 14 percent higher than the average (but 17 percent lower than an Ashkenazi’s income). An Israeli Arab’s income is 38 percent lower than the average, and an individual of Ethiopian origins has an income 44 percent lower than the average. Persons of Russian origins (father) earn 1 percent above the average, and the average monthly income of women is only 68.3 percent that of men (Swirski & Konor-Atias, 2017, pp. 11, 9). While the incidence of disposable poverty in the general population is 19.1 percent of families, it is 13.8 percent of Jewish families, 48.6 percent of ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) families, and 53.3 percent of Israeli Arab families (Israel National Insurance, 2016, p. 21, tab. 7). The two latter categories are the most impoverished in Israel. The incidence of poverty is also correlated with education. Close to 49 percent of households whose head has eight or fewer years of education live in poverty, whereas only 22 percent of those whose heads have nine to twelve years of education and 13.2 percent whose heads have thirteen or more years of education do so (Israel National Insurance, 2016, p. 21, tab. 7).

The socioeconomic cleavage projects on the pattern of political preference of the population. Among the lower classes there is a tendency to support the right-wing or sectorial parties (which mostly overlap: Yahadut Hatora, Shas, etc.) (Shalev & Levi, 2005), while the middle and upper classes tend to support the center parties or the center-left parties such as Kadima (2006, 2009), Yesh Atid (2013, 2015), Kulnau (2015), and Labor, which itself became a center party (cf. Arian & Shamir, 2011; Shamir & Rahat, 2017). In the national elections of 2015 the Likud won 23.4 percent of the vote and Labor (the HaMahne HaZioni) won 18.7 percent; in the five richest municipalities the results were (on average) Likud 18 percent and Labor 42.6 percent (based on Central Elections Committee, 2015; and Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Arab voters tend to vote for the Arab parties and in 2015 for the Joined Arab List.

In 2019 and 2020 the political system experienced a constitutional crisis, which has been manifested in three successive rounds of general elections, in difficulty forming a government, and in a clash of authority among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government. Public opinion has been sharply divided between a right-wing nationalist bloc, represented by the Likud and its allies, and a left and center bloc, represented in the main by the Blue and White Party and its allies. An analysis by the Adva Center of voting patterns by socioeconomic residential clusters shows a clear correspondence between low and middle-low socioeconomic position (hence also Mizrahi origin and religiosity) and nationalism and between high socioeconomic position (hence also Ashkenazi origin and secularity) and liberalism (see Hoffmann-Dishon, 2020).

THE ETHNIC CLEAVAGE: MIZRAHIM VERSUS ASHKENAZIM

Israeli Jewish society is commonly subdivided into two major “ethnic groups” (in Hebrew, single, *eda*; plural, *edot*), defined formally according to their continents of origin and informally by their presumed distinct cultures. Jews from Europe and America are identified as Ashkenazim (Ashkenaz was the medieval Jewish name for Germany), and Jews from Asia and Africa are identified as Mizrahim (literary Orientals or Sephardim; literary, of Spanish origin). Yet these groups are far from being sealed from each other and they mingle together in the middle-class social arenas, so that how much each category is cohesive internally or dissimilar from the other is a moot question. It is obvious, though, that both *edot* are considered part and parcel of the Jewish nation and that, despite initial and recurrent frictions, in recent decades both have taken an active part in shaping Israeli society, culture, and politics. Today it is commonly assumed that what really divides the *edot* is not so much inherent ethnic characteristics as such, but rather their distinct experience and status in Israeli society, combined with some folkloric vestiges of their traditional cultures (Ben-Rafael & Peres, 2005, pp. 108–127; Shafir & Peled, 2002, pp. 74–110; on the ethnic discourse in Israel see Goldberg & Bram, 2007; for the postcolonial perspective see Shenhav, 2006).

The pre-state Jewish community in Palestine consisted overwhelmingly of Ashkenazi Jews and only a minority of Mizrahi Jews. The large-scale encounter between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim began only in the 1950s, with the arrival in Israel, upon the state’s initiation, of a large influx of Jewish immigrants from North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia) and the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Syria, etc.). The Ashkenazi-to-Mizrahi population ratio has seen dramatic changes: in 1948, only 17 percent of the Jewish population was from Asia/Africa and close to 76 percent was from Europe/America (in fact America is negligible in this regard); by 1970, 48 percent were from Asia/Africa and 44 percent from Europe/America; and by 2002 the proportion had altered once more, due to immigration from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, to 29 percent from Asia/Africa and 41 percent from Europe/America (the rest of the population was born in Israel) (Sicron, 2004, p. 60, tab. 4.3).¹⁰

The policy toward the new immigrants from Asia and Africa suffered from duplicity. While the veteran community and its elite purported to “modernize” the newcomers and assimilate them within the nation, they simultaneously dispatched these immigrants to remote and barren peripheral locations. They were denigrated as suffering from a “complete lack of modernity” (Eisenstadt, 1954, p. 13); their “absorption” was described in terms of “de-socialization” of traditional norms and “re-socialization” into modern ones; and the degree of success of the process hinged on the newcomers’ psychosocial “predispositions,” “motivation,” “role-expectations,” and “ego-integrity” (Eisenstadt, 1954, p. 4). The overall goal was “to assimilate, within a definable culture, the

masses of the new immigrants coming from different environments and to create a unified and homogeneous nation" (Frankenstein, 1953, p. 13).

Yet as time passed, the expected integration of the Mizrahim proved sluggish and convoluted. Some salient instances of protest on their part—from the Wadi Salib riots of 1959 to the Black Panthers demonstrations in 1971 (Shalom Chetrit, 2010)—drew attention to what was recognized by the 1970s as the "social gaps" between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim in allocation of resources, be they material, social, or cultural (Ben-Rafael & Sharot, 1992; Peres, 1979; Smootha, 1978; Swirski, 1981).

Beginning in the 1970s, noticeable shifts took place in the political arena (as well as in the cultural sphere). The first generation of Mizrahi immigrants lacked independent organizational resources and were recruited by patronage into the Ashkenazi political parties (if at all). Yet gradually their numbers made them an electoral resource. While the Labor movement was slow to recognize the new political potential, the oppositional nationalist party Likud catered to Mizrahim, through both rhetoric and co-optation of local leaders into its ranks. Explicit ethnic politics was perceived as nationally divisive and hence as illegitimate, so the Likud has served as a *de facto* proxy Mizrahi party and has consolidated the identification of the Mizrahim with right-wing nationalism (still in effect today) (U. Cohen & Leon, 2011; Shapiro, 1989). The turn of the Mizrahim *en masse* to the Likud facilitated the "earthquake" elections of 1977, when for the first time since the 1930s Labor lost the reins of government and its hegemonic appeal.

The pattern of political-cultural preference of the Mizrahim is explained mainly by two factors. First, the veteran Ashkenazim were in the commanding positions in the 1950s and 1960s and thus are identified as the discriminating establishment. Second, by and large the Mizrahim had not been steeped in liberal, let alone socialist, ideology and the secular lifestyle of Labor, and they were repelled by it. So, it happened that while the veteran middle classes continued to be identified with Labor (which turned in effect into a centrist party), actual laborers in Jewish Israel found their political home in the nationalist right wing. Overall, the level of identification of Mizrahim and of "Russians" with the right-wing bloc has become one of the most consequential factors in Israeli politics since 1977.¹¹

Since the 1990s the conventional ethnic landscape has been changed by influxes of immigration from the former Soviet Union and from Ethiopia. These immigration waves contributed to blurring the customary Ashkenazi-Mizrahi ethnic fault line. By 2002 the "Russians" were the largest ethnic group in Jewish Israel, numbering around 1 million people (Sicron, 2004, p. 60);¹² the Ethiopian immigrants are a much smaller group, numbering close to 150,000 by 2016 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017b).

The peculiarity of the new ethnic situation is that these two latter groups do not fall neatly into the slots of the conventional dual ethnic map, which had evolved through decades of specific Israeli history. The "Russians" do not share the symbolic culture, status, and networks of veteran Ashkenazim ("Israelis"), yet they mostly have the potential human capital required for mobility; the "Ethiopians" do not share either the Ashkenazi *habitus* or the Mizrahi experience and culture, and on top of this they are singled out by their physical complexion, especially their dark skin color. The attitude of veteran Israel

toward the “Ethiopians” raises the question of racism and “Blackness” in Israeli society (Ashkenazi and Mizrahi likewise) (on the Russian component see Ben-Rafael & Peres, 2005, pp. 129–150; on the Ethiopian component see Ben-Rafael & Peres, 2005, pp. 151–164; Shafir & Peled, 2002, pp. 308–335).

CONCLUSION: CLEAVAGES AND POLITICS

This article has discussed four major social and cultural cleavages in Israel: national, cultural, socioeconomic, and ethnic. These cleavages, in their compound combinations, have played decisive roles in shaping the main political schism in Israel—historically, the one between Left and Right, and since the 1970s, between liberals and nationalists. Table 7.1 proposes an outline of this discussion, in which the left and right columns represent the two major societal protagonists in each cleavage, while the center column represents a sort of common ground or an “in between” social realm that might alleviate the antagonism among the contending sides.

Most important and all-encompassing is the national cleavage between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. This cleavage takes the form of majority–minority relations, but at its roots it is a division between a dominated indigenous society and a dominant settler society. Though there is common—and formally equal—citizenship, Jews and Arabs do not enjoy equal group recognition in Israel, which is a self-declared Jewish (and democratic) state. This is a source of constant tension between the two groups, which finds various political outlets. It clearly divides society and politics into two distinct contending categories—Jews versus Arabs—with only narrow common ground of formal citizenship for the realization of a fully democratic polity.

The cultural cleavage exists between secular and religious Jews in Israel. Despite the recurrent tensions and “religious wars” that characterize this cleavage, a large middle category of “traditionalist” Jews as well as a common Jewish national identity serve to accommodate the contending sides, who usually reach practical compromises over contentious issues. Since the 1970s there has been a significant correspondence between being more religious and being more nationalist, and the religious-national collectivity

Table 7.1 Sociopolitical Cleavages in Israel

Cleavage	Protagonist	Common Ground Zone	Protagonist
National	Israeli Jews	Citizenship	Palestinian Arabs
Cultural	Secular	Traditionalism	Religious
Socioeconomic	Upper class	Middle classes	Lower classes
Ethnic	Ashkenazim	Israeliness (as well as “Russians” and “Ethiopians”)	Mizrahim

has succeeded in creating a viable right-wing alternative to the veteran socialist-national agenda of the traditional Zionist Left or the liberal-national agenda of the political Center.

The socioeconomic (or class) cleavage has gone through several transformations. The initial phase of Jewish settlement (first *aliyah*) was based on private ownership and resulted in a diffused polity. It proved unsuccessful, and after the 1920s and 1930s it was succeeded by a socialist-constructivist alternative (second and third *aliyot*), which effectively organized a community based on public means and mixed forms of ownership. The creation of the state in 1948 and the “mass *aliyah*” of the 1950s and the 1960s brought in a concerted project of state-led economic modernization. One consequence was the creation of a socioeconomic gap between a new Mizrahi working class and an expanding Ashkenazi managerial class. Finally, the consequences of the 1967 and 1973 wars, the rise of Likud to power in 1977, the emergency plan of 1985, and external global pressures have brought about the neoliberalization of the Israeli economy. With it grew a powerful private sector with concentrated huge wealth at its top and an impoverished one-fifth of the population at the bottom, with an overly distressed middle class in between. Yet class politics tends to flow through identity channels—which brings us to the ethnic cleavage.

The ethnic cleavage between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews is basically a legacy of the 1950s and 1960s and is significantly entangled with the cleavages previously discussed. Though there is still a noticeable gap between the two ethnic categories in terms of income and education, a common Israeli identity is being forged. There is a growing Mizrahi middle class, and there is a wide-ranging sense of shared nationality, based on common religion, language, everyday culture, and family connections, as well as a sense of an outside threat and commitment to the security ethos. With that, ethnic identities still simmer in the political arena. To the extent that being Mizrahi partially correlates with low income and religiosity, it also correlates with a right-wing tendency, and the opposite applies to being Ashkenazi. The “Russians” are exceptional in tending to be both middle class *and* right wing. The presence of the “Russians” and the “Ethiopians” blurs the binary Ashkenazi–Mizrahi dichotomy.

Finally, a note of qualification is in order. The analysis presented here of social cleavages and their political implications relates to the state of Israel in its 1949 (ceasefire) international borders, as they existed until 1967. After fifty years of holding the occupied territories under a military regime and the “crawling” or de facto annexation of them to Israel, it is unclear whether the unit of analysis should not be extended to include all the territory and population actually under Israeli control (cf. Kimmerling, 1989). In that case the relative sizes of the subcategories would have to be changed: the population between the sea and the river (Mediterranean and Jordan, respectively) is roughly evenly divided between Jews and Arabs—and hence the terms of the analysis would have to be changed as well. If these conditions endure, the social cleavages and the political dynamics associated with them will be radically transformed. Under such conditions the concept of a “Jewish and democratic state” will not hold water anymore, if it even does so now.

NOTES

1. Cf. Horowitz & Lissak (1989); Smootha (1993); Shamir & Arian (1999); Yuchtman-Yaar & Peres (2000); Shafir & Peled (2002); Eisenstadt (2004); Ben-Rafael & Peres (2005); Neuberger (2006); Arian & Shamir (2008); Grinberg (2013).
2. This figure includes the Druze community, which numbers 140,000 persons. Its status in Israel is distinct. For the sake of brevity, it is not discussed here.
3. Among Israeli Jews 48 percent agree with the statement "Arabs should be expelled or transferred from Israel" and 46 percent disagree. The breakdown by religiosity is: agree—71 percent Dati, 59 Haredi, 54 Masorti, and 36 Hiloni; and disagree—Hiloni 58 percent, Masorti 39, Haredi 32, and Dati 26. The breakdown by ethnicity is: 56 percent of Mizrahi Jews agree with the statement, compared to 40 percent of Ashkenazi Jews (disagree 53 percent Ashkenazi Jews and 39 percent Mizrahi Jews) (Pew Research Center, 2016a).
4. Also see the Guttman Survey Center (2009).
5. This is the place to emphasize that Judaism is largely identified in Israel with the Orthodox trend. The Reformist and Conservative trends are small and weak and have little cultural influence and political representation.
6. One recent piece of data may serve as an illustration of the strong affinity among nationality, religiosity, and politics. A study asked a sample of the population to identify itself as Left, Right, or Center. Among secular respondents 19 percent identified with the Left, 46 percent with the Center, and 35 percent with the Right. Among national-religious respondents, only 2 percent identified with the Left and only 10 percent with the Center, while 88 percent identified with the Right. Among ultra-Orthodox, 4 percent answered Left, 10 percent Center, and 72 percent Right. Among Arab respondents, 46 percent answered Left, 50 percent Center, and 3 percent Right. To the question of whether Israel should stay in the occupied territories or withdraw from them, 38 percent of secular respondents were for staying, compared to 82 percent of national-religious ones, 65 percent of ultra-Orthodox ones, and 8 percent of Arabs (Mintz, 2017, pp. 59–60). And compare also with endnote 3.
7. Compared to the euro area at \$35,000, members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development at \$37,000, New Zealand at \$37,500, France at \$37,800, Japan at \$38,000, Germany at \$47,000, and the United States at \$57,500 (all numbers are current US\$) (World Bank, 2017).
8. The hi-tech sector is responsible for close to 20 percent of Israeli exports, but for only 5 percent of the workforce. Retrieved from Central Bureau of Statistics, http://www.cbs.gov.il/shnaton67/diag/18_04.pdf
9. The precariat includes a large female component and a growing sector of "foreign workers," who fill the unskilled jobs that Palestinians used to fill until the intifada of 1987.
10. The ethnic statistics become more complicated with the passage of generations and with the mixture created by intermarriages.
11. Data from voting analysis as well as public opinion surveys show the substantial correspondence that obtains between being Mizrahi and being right-wing (cf. Neuberger, 2006; Shamir & Arian, 1999; Arian & Shamir, 2008).
12. With substantial internal diversities, though, including some 300,000 non-Jewish relatives of Jews, who are eligible under immigration law for citizenship privileges, which are usually accorded to Jews only.

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CHAPTER 8

ARAB CITIZENS IN THE “JEWISH” STATE OF ISRAEL

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CAN we describe the relationship between the state of Israel and its Arab citizens¹ as “ambivalent” (Rudnitzky, 2017)?² On the one hand, the government is using its majority in the Knesset to legislate laws that undermine the status and legitimacy of Arab citizens, particularly the new Basic Law: Israel—The Nation State of the Jewish People, enacted in 2018. On the other hand, since 2007 the same government has been investing a great sum of money to improve the living conditions in the Arab localities. This ambivalence is reflected in surveys: 68 percent of Jews say that it is impossible to be part of the Palestinian people and be loyal to the State of Israel, while only 54 percent of Arabs say that they feel part of Israeli society, indicating contradicting trends of alienation and increased integration (Hermann, Cohen, Omar, Heller, & Lazar-Shoef, 2017).

Israel’s Declaration of Independence proclaims full equality for all Israel’s citizens and calls upon members of the Arab nation “to participate in the up building of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.” This solemn pledge has not been kept. Nevertheless, the growing pluralism of the political system has strengthened the foothold of Arabs in Israeli society and politics. This can be seen in their shedding of Jewish political patronage and the rise of a generation of Arab intellectuals—aware, knowledgeable, and determined to get their fair share of resources and rights, political and social (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2002). This change led to the writing of the “Vision Documents” (2006 and thereafter), in which prominent Arab intellectuals and practitioners outlined their aspirations and plans as citizens of Israel.

The Jewish and Arab communities in Israel are distinct from each other nationally, religiously, culturally, linguistically, and geographically. This situation makes boundary crossing difficult, but what is distinct to Israel is that the problematic interethnic relations are exacerbated by the Arab–Israeli conflict and the territories occupied in 1967. The small

circle of Jewish–Arab relations within Israel overlaps the larger circle of conflictual relations with Palestinians, Arab countries, and the Islamic world; separating them emotionally is impossible (H. Ghanem, 2009; Haidar, 2018). Furthermore, each group is struggling with questions of its own identity: Jewish citizens are still wondering, “Who is a Jew” and “Who is an Israeli”; Arab citizens are asking, “Who is a Palestinian–Arab–Muslim (Sunni or Shia)/Christian/Druze”?³ These struggles over individual, communal, religious, and national identity and the tensions among them do not foster rapprochement, compromise, or concessions (Al-Haj, 1997). And these struggles only intensified after 2011 following the convulsions of the Arab Spring and the bloodshed between Sunnis and Shias in the Muslim world. Is this a “wicked problem” (Rittel & Webber, 1973), difficult to conceptualize and resolve, at least politically?

This chapter presents (with some inevitable reductionism and oversimplification) the two opposing poles on this open question, representing approaches that have been around since Israel’s creation:

- Although Arab citizens of Israel are legal citizens, they are loyal not to Israel, but to the hostile neighboring countries. They pose security threats (as Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims) as well as the threat of territorial irredentism.
- Israel’s Arab citizens are citizens like all others, with rights and obligations as individuals and with a distinct national, religious, cultural, and linguistic identity as a group.

These two approaches can lead either to “external” solutions—territorial division, population transfer, autonomy, a binational state, and so forth—or to ideological solutions: an alliance of Semitic nations (Jews and Arabs), class solidarity, secular Israeli multinationalism, and others. Let us first reject the immoral solutions (such as “transfer”—forcing Arab citizens and Arab towns out of Israel’s borders) and set aside currently impractical solutions (such as a binational state).⁴ And if we exclude maintaining the status quo, two political alternatives remain: a policy of absolute control, that is, the resumption of martial law over Arabs in Israel, or a policy never before attempted in Israel: accepting Arabs as full-fledged, equal citizens, ensuring they have the same status and rights as Jewish citizens and accepting them as partners in a new Israeli civil state.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

With the establishment of the British Mandate for Palestine (Eretz Israel), the Arab and Jewish communities found themselves living side by side. The former was an indigenous community, many people having lived there for generations, some coming from nearby, but with a national identity yet inchoate. The latter, a community of Jewish immigrants inspired by the national Zionist awakening in the nineteenth century, was determined to establish a state for the Jewish people in the historical Land of Israel. When the United

Nations voted in 1947 to partition the land into two states, one Jewish and one Arab, fewer than 2 million people were living in Mandatory Palestine, two-thirds of them Arab and one-third Jewish. According to the partition resolution, some 800,000 people would reside in the designated Jewish state, two-thirds of them Jewish and one-third Arab, while the designated Arab state would contain fewer than 2 percent Jews.

The partition proposal was accepted by the Zionist movement but rejected by the Arab leadership of Palestine and the Arab countries. In May 1948, the State of Israel was established, but the Arab state that was supposed to arise in parallel did not come into being. Controversy aside about how many native Arabs fled and how many were driven out, as of 1949 some 150,000 Arabs remained within the ceasefire lines of Israel. Upon the cessation of hostilities, some of the Arabs who remained in Palestine—or who returned during the ceasefire (between 20,000 and 50,000)—became “internal refugees” (residents of destroyed villages who now lived elsewhere in Israel) or “present absentees.”⁵ This definition includes all the refugees who remained within Israel prior to the census taken on November 8, 1948 (Kabha & Barzilai, 1996).⁶ The martial law imposed in September 1948 represented a clear security orientation and became the main instrument for dealing with Arab minority affairs (Benziman & Mansour, 1992; Osatzky-Lazar, 2006, pp. 16–20, 48–50).

Martial law was imposed over the areas inhabited by the Arab population to ensure control over the Arab citizens by imposing limitations on movement, expulsions, travel permits, administrative detention, curfews, and blocking entry to some areas. In addition, there were nonsecurity goals: preventing the entry of Arab refugees to Israel, preventing Arab residents from returning to their homes in conquered areas, and keeping Jewish immigrant towns in the periphery separated from the Arab population. Despite proposed legislation, public petitions, and recommendations by a ministerial committee, the security establishment under David Ben-Gurion staunchly objected to rescinding martial law. It was Levi Eshkol, heir to Ben-Gurion as prime minister and minister of defense, who engineered the easing of the military administration in late 1966. The new circumstances created by the 1967 war and the imposition of martial law in the occupied territories led to its final termination within the borders of Israel.

The outcome of the 1967 war further exacerbated the problematic status of Arabs in Israel. First, the occupation of the territories strengthened the bond between Palestinians in Israel and those in the territories. Second, the war fueled nationalist and hawkish views among Jews in Israel. The liberation/conquest of the holy places evoked national and even messianic dreams among Jews and frustration among Muslims, which intensified the tension among the individual, communal, religious, and national identities within Israel. This tension erupted into confrontation and bloodshed on March 30, 1976, which came to be known as Land Day. Six demonstrators were killed in clashes with the police and Israeli Defense Forces troops. Ever since, Arabs in Israel have commemorated this day with strikes and protests.

A similar event, though in a different context, occurred in October 2000. After member of Knesset (MK) Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the Temple Mount and subsequent eruption of the second intifada, violent clashes broke out between Arab

demonstrators and security forces. Police fire resulted in the killing of twelve Arab and one Jewish citizens. These events deepened the mutual distrust: Jews felt threatened, fearing that the Arabs were joining the intifada in the territories, and Arabs viewed the willingness of the police to open fire on and kill demonstrators as proof that the state cared little about shedding the blood of its Arab citizens. Pressure from Arab leaders as well as the Jewish media forced the government headed by Ehud Barak to establish a state commission of inquiry (on the Or Commission report [Or, Hatib, & Shamir, 2003]; see discussion later in this chapter) to investigate “the clashes between the security forces and Israeli citizens.”⁷

The status of Arabs in Israel is linked to the future of the territories and resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict. The statement by MK Emil Habibi, renowned Arab author, that “my country is at war with my people” intimates that this conflict is not “external” to the state and not in the realm of ordinary majority–minority relations. Israel’s inability to resolve the conflict with the Palestinians casts a dark shadow over Israeli society, including relations between its Jewish and Arab citizens. Deepening this shadow are the two nations’ very different historical memories of the 1948 events: the *war of liberation* of one side is the *nakba*—the disaster—of the other.⁸ The pendulum has swung erratically over the years: from hope and willingness for conciliation to despair and confrontation in the wake of the two intifadas, the firing of rockets from Gaza, the frequent military campaigns, and the internal wars within the Muslim world. And these developments have been reflected in the two paths traveled on the issue of the place of Arabs in Israel: social and political exclusion in parallel with more integration and equality.

Since the repeal of the military administration in 1966, the status of Arabs in Israel has been reflected in laws that explicitly cite Jewish national origin as the basis for legislation, such as the Law of Return (1950) and the Basic Laws that define Israel as a “Jewish and democratic” state (Kretzmer, 1990). Other laws imply a distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish citizens, such as the laws and regulations that seek to preserve the Jewish character of Israel, and the less symbolic property laws and laws related to resource allocation.⁹

SOCIETY AND POLITICS

The Arab population of Israel at the end of 2019 was 1.9 million, comprising approximately 21 percent of the total population of Israel (19 percent without the residents of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights).¹⁰ The Arab population is 85 percent Muslim, 7 percent Christian, and 8 percent Druze. Most Arabs live in the north of Israel, constituting 55 percent of the total northern population. Some 54 percent live in local and regional councils; the others live in the thirteen Arab cities (34 percent), the seven mixed cities (8 percent), and other localities (4 percent). Most communities are rural, with a population of 20,000 or less. The Bedouins number over 200,000, and only 4 percent are still nomadic (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

Social Gaps

In most social areas, progress has been made in the situation of the Arabs in Israel, yet major gaps remain compared with the Jewish population. Gaps begin early, with a low proportion of Arab 2-year-olds attending preschools, and even though the proportion of Arabs and Jews in high schools is similar, a gap of 14 percent remains between those who meet university entrance requirements. With regard to the standard of living, significant gaps prevail between Jewish and Arab citizens, though these gaps have narrowed.¹¹ The low socioeconomic ranking of Arab localities—all are in the five lowest clusters (out of ten)—is a reflection of the low public investment in Arab towns compared with Jewish towns. This is evident in inadequate service provision, from water and sewage to medical clinics, fire trucks, and post offices.

Parties

The participation of Arabs in Israeli political parties changed significantly with the shift from “affiliated” lists operating under the aegis of Jewish parties to independent Arab parties. A third type of party—a joint list of Arabs and Jews—called Maki (the Israeli Communist Party) emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. A later incarnation of the Arab–Jewish partnership was Hadash (the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, founded by Rakah), which won about four seats in each Knesset from 1977 to 2013, with one seat usually held by a Jew.

In the 1950s and 1960s, approximately 50 percent of Arab voters cast ballots for the affiliated Arab parties, about 20 percent voted for Maki/Rakah, and some 30 percent voted for Jewish parties, even right-wing and Orthodox religious parties. Jewish parties—mainly Mapai—that drafted Arab leaders in exchange for representation in the Knesset founded the affiliated parties that were active until 1977. The Arab MKs in the affiliated parties were traditional leaders, heads of clans or clergy, whose constituents were rewarded for their political support. In the 1981 election, the Labor Party dropped sponsorship of its affiliated party and reserved places on its Knesset list for an Arab and a Bedouin candidate. Other parties followed suit and established “district primaries” to guarantee Knesset seats for Arabs, Druze, and Bedouin (Neuberger, 2000, p. 136).

Since the 1980s, independent Arab parties have been the main vehicle for the participation of Arab citizens in Israel’s parliamentary politics. The first exclusive Arab party—in terms of its positions, voters, and representatives—was the Arab Democratic Party (Mada), which won one seat in the 1988 election and two in 1992. Previously, a joint Jewish–Arab party had been formed—the Progressive List for Peace headed by Mohammed Miari and Matti Peled—which initially won two seats, dropped to one in 1988, and did not pass the electoral threshold in 1992. In 1996, groups of Arab academics came together to found the National Democratic Assembly (Balad), headed by Azmi Bishara. That year, Balad partnered with Hadash, and together they won five seats. Subsequently, Balad has run on its own and won two to three Knesset seats. In sum,

since 1996, Hadash and the Arab parties have represented most Arabs in Israel and have won a combined total of nine to eleven seats in every election (about 8 percent of the total Knesset seats).

In 2014, the electoral threshold was raised to 3.25 percent (at least four seats), supposedly to reduce the number of parties in the Knesset, but mainly to reduce or even eliminate Arab representation. This law decreased the electoral chances of two Arab parties (three MKs each in the 2013 Knesset election) and Hadash (four MKs). Personal rivalries and ideological differences seemed unsurpassable obstacles to unifying the parties between, for example, the Islamic movement and the secular arm of Hadash, or between the nationalist Balad and the more moderate Arab Movement for Renewal. The external pressure conjured a political miracle, and a coalition of all four parties was formed—under the noncommittal name “the Joint List”—preserving their separate identities. Ayman Odeh, the secretary general of Hadash, headed the coalition. Defying expectations, the Arab vote increased to 64 percent in the 2015 election, and the Joint List won thirteen Knesset seats, becoming the third largest party in the Knesset.

In the April 2019 election, the Joint List split into two and both were severely punished by the Arab voters: participation dropped to 49 percent and both parties together won just ten seats. The Joint List was re-established in the September 2019 election, bouncing back to thirteen seats, and achieved the highest ever Arab representation in the Knesset in the March 2020 election—fifteen seats—caused by a high rate of participation of 59 and 65 percent, respectively.

Voting

Table 8.1 shows the increased representation of Arabs in the Knesset and the changes in the competition among Arab parties (in selected years) through 2020. It illustrates the rise of independent Arab parties; the gradual decline of Arab–Jewish parties; fluctuation in the support for Mapai/Labor; ongoing, though inconsistent, support of Arab voters for the Likud and Jewish religious parties (National Religious Party and Shas); and some ideological support for Jewish parties such as Meretz, which almost disappeared completely in 2020.

Voting for Mapai and the affiliated lists had instrumental motives and was part and parcel of the government’s political patronage of the Arab population during the first two decades of the state. Thus, in parallel with the decline of the affiliated lists from almost 60 percent of the Arab vote at their peak in 1959 was the waning of support among Arab voters after 1973, which reached a low of 4–5 percent for the Labor Party in 2013 and 2015. Joint Arab–Jewish parties experienced an ebb and flow in support, from a high of 52 percent of the Arab vote in 1977 to a low of 23 percent (for Hadash) in 2013. The Communist component of this partnership almost entirely disappeared; Maki had 22 percent of the Arab vote in the 1949 election and 23 percent at its height in the 1961 election. The number of Jewish votes given to parties defined as Arab–Jewish is very low: several thousand in the 2015 election and a little more in the 2020 election for the Joint List. Nevertheless, Hadash continues to affirm its strong commitment to this partnership.

Table 8.1 Arab Vote Distribution (Select Years) in Knesset Elections, 1949–2020 (Rounded Percentages)

Knesset	Year	"Affiliated Lists"	Jewish-Arab Party (Maki/Hadash/Other)	Arab Parties	Mapai/Labor/Mapam	Herut/Likud/National Religious Party/Shas	Other Parties*
1	1949	52	22	—	10	1	15
4	1959	59	11	—	24	6	—
7	1969	41	31	—	17	10	2
9	1977	21	52	—	11	8	8
12	1988	—	34	25	17	10	14
15	1999	—	21	49	7	8	16
18	2009	—	28	54	5	6	7
20	2015	—	83**	—	5	6	6
21	2019a	—	40***	32****	1	8	19
22	2019b	—	82**	—	2	5	11
23	2020	—	88**	—	—	5	7

* From 1992, primarily Meretz; 2015, Meretz, Kulanu, Yesh Atid; April 2019, primarily Meretz and Blue and White; September 2019 and March 2020, primarily Blue and White. ** United List. *** Hadash + Taal. **** Raam + Balad.

Source: Up to 2015: Central Bureau of Statistics, Annual Report, 2017. 2019–2020: Rudnitzky, 2020.

After the late 1980s, support for Hadash and the Arab parties reached 70–80 percent by the 2000s. However, disappointment, as well as the events of October 2000, strengthened the exclusive Arab parties, which (without Hadash) won 54 percent of the Arab vote in 2009 and 2013, ensuring a strong share in the Joint List. Yet Arab support for the ruling Jewish parties did not disappear with the decline of Labor. In the 1981 election, following the political upheaval of 1977, 7 percent of the Arab vote went to the winning Likud and another 7 percent to the National Religious Party. The rise of Shas brought it 5 percent of the Arab vote in 1992, and it has continued to win some support among Arab voters. Arab support for the right-wing parties is surprising, considering their positions on the occupied territories and on making Israel a rather exclusive Jewish state. This instrumental support of the parties in power is an effort to influence government decisions and to advance the local interests of Arab groups and leaders. For example, for many years, the National Religious Party and Shas headed the Interior Ministry, which controls the Arab local authorities; some parties, such as the Likud, established Druze electoral districts, virtually guaranteeing a Knesset seat to a Druze candidate. The average combined Arab vote for all the Jewish parties was 19 percent in 2013 and 2015. The percentage increased considerably in the April 2019 election (see Table 8.1), with many Arabs voting for the new Blue and White List, and decreased again in the next two

elections. Thus, in March 2020, only 12 percent—the lowest number ever of Arab voters—voted for a non-Arab party.

Arab voters have generally not been able to translate their votes into political power, certainly compared to the influence of much smaller Jewish groups. Arabs in Israel lack political clout because they are outside the Jewish–Zionist consensus, and their ideological, collective, and individual needs are accorded only partial recognition. Their representatives have been excluded from the government coalitions, with the exception of a short period and only partially, in the governments of Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres (1992–1996). Another reason is internal: the Arabs in Israel are a minority whose political power has been undercut by ideological, religious, social, and local divisions within the Arab community. The Jewish majority is also divided, but a majority can afford to be. After the March 2020 election, there appeared an opportunity to form a coalition of sixty-two MKs, headed by Benny Gantz and supported by the Joint List. However, the refusal of two members of Blue and White to vote for a government “supported by Arabs” was enough to abort such a historical progression.

The frustration among Arab voters is reflected in the fluctuating gap between Jewish and Arab citizens in voter turnout. In the Knesset elections between 1951 and 1973, more Arabs voted (average 87 percent) than Jews because of the political patronage system. After that, Arab voter turnout fell below that of the Jews, which had also declined (Atmor, 2013). In the elections between 2003 and 2013, the gap widened to an average of 9 percent, significantly decreasing the representation of Arabs in the Knesset as well as the size of the entire Left political bloc. The defiantly low turnout of Arabs (18 percent) in the direct prime ministerial election of 2001 reflected their alienation as well as protest against the state following the October 2000 events (A. Ghanem, 2004, p. 330). Nevertheless, voter turnout had risen since 2015 (with the exception of April 2019 when the Joint List Split) and reached 65 percent in 2020, 7 percent less than the Jewish vote. Thus, raising the electoral threshold triggered an act of defiance, a counterreaction: to oppose the expectations of those who wished to lower Arab Knesset representation. The Joint List, headed by a new leader, recorded both a high turnout and the highest number of Arab MKs.

Voter turnout for local elections in Arab towns is very high, indicating the importance attributed to municipal politics by Arab voters. Recent turnout for municipal elections has been 14 percent higher than for the Knesset elections held between 1999 and 2006, with the gap rising to 17 percent in 2013. Local elections are marked by heated family and clan feuds. Traditional frameworks hold sway in these elections, with candidates representing large clans or the coalition of several clans. In the local elections of 2003, for example, forty-two of the fifty-three mayors were elected because of voters’ allegiance to the candidates’ families (Mustafa, 2005).

Failure to address the shortage of land reserves for housing and industrial development means that the hardship of the Arab local authorities will only worsen. Since 1948, some six hundred Jewish localities have been established, but not even one new Arab locality, with the exception of townships created for concentrating the nomad Bedouin population in defined areas. Arab local governments find themselves in dire straits, caught between difficult conditions and sparse resources and the rising expectations of

the residents, who view them as their main political arena (Galnoor & Blander, 2013, pp. 393–403).

THE POLITICAL AND CIVIL STATUS OF ARABS IN ISRAEL

The shaky status of Israel's Arab citizens is evident in the discourse about the legitimacy of “the Arab vote” in policymaking. It was the potential democratic integration of some Arab–Jewish parties (such as Hadash and possibly the Joint List) within the left-wing camp that catalyzed mounting challenges by right-wing parties about the right of Arab citizens to participate in critical political decisions, such as the peace agreements with the Palestinian Authority. Such delegitimization has existed since Israel's early years and was at that time not limited to the right wing. However, it was accelerated by the election stalemate between the Right and Left created by the 1980s elections. On the one hand, the stalemate raised the value of the Arab vote, particularly since the Arabs in Israel were close to the political Left on foreign affairs. On the other hand, Arab parties were not recognized as partners. In 1984, for example, when it appeared as if a left-wing government would incorporate Arab parties, Yitzhak Shamir announced that under no circumstances should a government lean on the votes of non-Jews.

In the 1992 election, the Labor Party headed by Rabin returned to power with a slim edge of one Knesset seat and created a bloc of sixty-one MKs together with Meretz, Hadash, and the Arab Democratic Party to oppose the right-wing and religious parties. When Shas bowed out of the coalition, it left the government reliant upon the quasi-coalition agreements reached with the five MKs of Hadash and the Arab Democratic Party.¹² The fact that the government relied on “the Arab vote” ignited the delegitimization campaign against the Rabin government in the early 1990s, a campaign that was exacerbated by the Oslo agreements. Right-wing opposition members repeatedly said that the Rabin government had “no mandate” because it did not have a “Jewish majority.” For instance, the Tzomet and Moledet platforms in 1996 (and later the Yisrael Beitenu Party) conditioned the voting right of Arab citizens on a loyalty oath—a demand that no free citizen in a democracy should have to meet.

Despite the fact that the Arab parties almost doubled their numbers in the Knesset, the feeling grew among Arab voters that gains were meager and hopes for more were in vain. Disappointment over unmet expectations pushed Arab political activists into new political frameworks that no longer strove for strategic cooperation with the Jewish parties (Osatzky-Lazar & Ghanem, 1996). Similarly, some members of the Joint List were unwilling to cooperate with Zionist parties and had refused to sign a surplus-votes agreement with Meretz prior to the 2015 election. As noted, the 2019–2020 elections strengthened the political power of the Arab citizens; however, the discriminating barrier, preventing their recognition as legitimate partners in Israeli politics and society, has not been removed.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES TOWARD ARAB CITIZENS

The indigenous Arab community that remained in Israel after 1948 was disorganized, had a rather tenuous national consciousness, had a mostly rural Muslim majority, and did not have a well-developed economy (Grinberg, 2001, pp. 585–610). The majority Arab community was transformed into a small minority, with almost no political, economic, religious, or cultural elite (most of whom had fled or were expelled from Israel), and it became entirely subservient to Jewish rule. What's more, the enmity between Israel and its Arab neighbors adversely affected the Arabs who remained, further eroding their status. The Jewish public and its leaders viewed the Arab community as a security threat, fearful about its loyalty to and identification with the state. Accordingly, during the patronage stage in the first decades, the policies toward Arab citizens were marked by suspicion, scrutinization, segmentation, dependence, and co-optation (Lustick, 1980).

Changes began in the 1980s, rooted in processes in both Jewish and Arab societies, that forced the government to change its policies. Some of the Jewish public and leaders began to move gradually to a civic approach, one that was more inclusive of non-Jewish citizens, manifested in legislation, ministry policies, and court decisions. In parallel, Arab society has had enough of the patron–client relationship.

Overview

During the patronage stage, most interactions with Arabs in Israel did not take place in the Knesset or in courts, but in government ministries. Military rule was imposed without Knesset legislation, decided in closed government deliberations based solely on a security perspective. Government policy toward the Arabs was formulated by the advisor for Arab affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister (Benziman & Mansour, 1992, pp. 52–53, 59–60). During the years 1948–1967, apparently only three decisions were taken by the government plenary about “the Arab sector”: to equalize the wages of Arab and Jewish workers (1952), to hold elections for the Nazareth municipality (1954), and to develop an economic rehabilitation plan for the Arabs in Israel (1958). After 1967, attention was diverted to the territories; only in 1973 did the government begin to discuss its orientation toward Arabs in Israel, and no explicit decisions were taken.¹³

The laws that did pass in the Knesset, however, determined the fate of the Arab population, particularly regarding citizenship and land. Grim events—such as the Kfar Qasim (1956) and Land Day (1976) killings—were not substantively addressed in the Knesset. The presence of Arab MKs in the affiliated party lists was not sufficient to engender change because they were regarded as merely intermediaries between their communities and government representatives. For example, Mapam, Rakah, and public

protests led the efforts to rescind military rule, not the affiliated Arab lists. The rise of independent Arab parties and the inclusion of Arabs in a few Jewish parties strengthened the ability of the Arab public to raise their concerns in the Knesset, but their political influence was still negligible. For instance, Arab MKs were generally appointed to the less important Knesset committees.

Following Land Day in 1976, the shortsighted security approach continued to be the policy of successive Israeli governments. There was no attempt to address the fundamental issues related to the Arab public, despite the impact of dramatic events on Arabs and Jews (the Six-Day War, the first and second intifadas, the Gulf War of 1991). Government attention to the Arabs was usually provoked by the need to find an immediate solution to a specific problem (such as the October 2000 events). In 2007, the government established the Authority for Economic Development in the Arab, Druze, and Circassian sectors. It was a response to stern directives by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to increase the participation of Arabs (and ultra-Orthodox) in the workforce prior to its accepting Israel as a member (Ministry of Economy, 2013). Some steps were made, including a willingness to back them up with funding. Nevertheless, the amounts actually transferred were much smaller than what was promised, and the same old programs have been repeated and recycled (Haidar, 2005, pp. 19–41; State Comptroller of Israel, 2013, pp. 335–357).

On December 30, 2015, after long, acrimonious deliberations and overcoming fierce opposition from right-wing ministers, the Bureau of the Budget, headed by Amir Levy (backed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), and the Arab Economic Development Authority managed to get the government to approve an ambitious five-year plan (2016–2020) for the “economic integration of minority population in Israel” (Government of Israel, Resolution 922, 2015). The plan is unique for several reasons. First, it is comprehensive and integrated into the annual budget base of almost all ministries in education, infrastructure and transportation, industry and commerce, employment, internal security, culture, housing, higher education, tourism, water and sewage, sports, community services, health, and local authorities. Second, for the first time, Arab MKs, representatives of Arab communities, and social organizations such as Sikkuy participated in the formulation of the plan. Third, despite enormous obstacles, the plan has been gradually being implemented, and about 40 percent of the \$15 billion NIS allocated was spent in the first two years (Sikkuy, n.d.). However, the continuation of the implementation of the plan is in jeopardy because of the political crisis in Israel (2019–2020) and the freezing of the state budget.

Types of Policy

The main policy options available to Israeli governments were “transfer,” coercion, coexistence, and full integration. Not one of these was formally adopted or consistently applied by any government, but none is entirely theoretical.

- (1) The underlying assumption that Arabs in Israel are an incorrigible fifth column leads to the immoral solution of “transfer”: expulsion from Israel. During the War of Independence, some Palestinian inhabitants were forcibly expelled (Morris, 1988). Transfer as a legitimate policy disappeared after the 1960s, yet later certain political parties adopted it: Moledet (1998–1999) advocated transfer (“by choice”), and Yisrael Beiteinu impugns the loyalty of Arab citizens. Moreover, the 2019 “Trump plan” advocated the handover of Israeli Arab towns to Palestine in exchange for settlements in the occupied territories.
- (2) The policy of coercion adopted by Israeli governments after 1949 was based on the presumption that the Arabs in Israel were an imminent threat, not equal citizens or a political community. This was a one-sided interpretation of the partition principle; since the Jewish and Arab communities preferred national independence, the two sides could not coexist or cooperate. This was the basis for the military rule (Korn, 2008). In the 1960s, supporters of the coercion policy realized that it had not achieved its goals and needlessly punished Arabs who were not a security risk. Ethical reasons were also given; a democratic state cannot use such measures against its own citizens. This change in attitude led to easements in the military regime, which was ultimately rescinded in 1966 by the government headed by Eshkol.
- (3) The gradual decline of the coercion policy (which has not yet disappeared entirely) yielded to an approach—or perhaps a slogan—of coexistence. State authorities came to realize that the arbitrary wielding of power that marginalized the Arabs could not continue indefinitely (Jamal, 2011). The change in policy was neither comprehensive nor calculated, but a collection of incremental steps: removal of some administrative restrictions accompanied by declarations about seeking “normalization” between Jews and Arabs and formal decisions to improve the living conditions of Arab citizens. The approach was conditional, with overtones of the patronage: the state would recognize its responsibility in exchange for the Arabs maintaining law and order. The response of many Arabs was that “existence precedes co-existence.”
- (4) The last option of full integration has never been tried. Instead, the government adopted the ongoing policy of economic development. It was shaped by the fear of the Arab “demographic threat” and the trend toward “Palestinization.” The assumption that Arab citizens could not identify with the state persisted; hence, Israel should make do with their loyalty on security matters and fulfilling their civic duties (Benziman & Mansour, 1992, pp. 98–100). The complementary assumption has been that increased resource allocation would elicit greater support for the state. Yet even this instrumental goal has not been implemented consistently.

Government policy therefore has been full of contradictions, with some elements of a “transition to civic thinking” dating from the 1990s (Reiter, 2000). The Rabin government (1992–1995)—for ideological reasons that were reinforced by the peace process

and by the coalition agreements with Arab parties—adopted a policy designed to improve the living conditions of Arab citizens. These harbingers of policy change included cessation of the expropriation of lands, the reopening of a large tract of land in the Galilee (area 9) that had been off limits to its Arab owners, narrowing the gap of allocations between Jewish and Arab towns, invalidating discriminatory legislation such as the army veterans’ grant of the National Security Institute, and introducing affirmative action to employ Arab and Druze academicians in the civil service (Galnoor, 2003, p. 441).¹⁴ The Barak government (1999–2001) adopted a similar policy but did not last long enough to implement it. In addition, a number of legal rulings have played a significant role in redressing some rights of Arab citizens.¹⁵

The Or Commission of inquiry (2003) is also an important landmark. For the first time in Israel’s history, an independent state body investigated an issue that dealt entirely with the problems of Arab citizens. The committee chose not to ignore the historical, political, and economic context of the October 2000 events and submitted comprehensive policy recommendations aimed at “erasing the stain of discrimination against Arab citizens in all its various forms and expressions” (Or et al., 2003, Part 6, para. 12). Despite the declarations, the Sharon and Olmert governments (2001–2009) did little on behalf of Arab citizens, while frequent manifestations of racism continued, primarily in legislative proposals tabled in the Knesset.

As noted, prior to joining the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (in 2010), the Netanyahu governments (from 2009) made important decisions, mainly regarding the Arab labor force, and in 2016 started to implement them. However, major changes in the socioeconomic situation of Arab citizens are not yet evident.

On a symbolic level, several small changes have occurred. Examples are prizes awarded to Arab authors, including the Israel Prize and the Speaker of the Knesset Award; the appointment of the first Arab justice to the Supreme Court; a steady increase in Arab students in Israeli colleges and universities; the appointment of Arabs to Israeli embassies; Arab artists, writers, and athletes representing Israel abroad; and the 2007 law establishing the Academy of the Arabic Language in Israel.¹⁶

A NATIONAL MINORITY IN THE “JEWISH” STATE OF ISRAEL

The protracted Arab–Israeli conflict and the shared national identity of the minority with an adversary across the border encumber the quandary about the status of Arabs in Israel. On most issues, the boundaries of Jewish consensus in Israel leave the Arabs on the outside. In the best case, Arab citizens are perceived by a majority of Jews as not belonging to Israeli society;¹⁷ in the worst case, they are considered a hostile minority that must be monitored for security reasons. A factor, partly symbolic and partly real,

that causes intense reaction among Arabs is the legal definition of Israel as a “Jewish and democratic” state and the compulsive effort to further crystallize its (already evident) “Jewish identity.” The new Basic Law of 2018 does not even mention “democracy,” only that Israel is “the nation state of the Jewish people,” and highlights the supremacy of Jewish holidays, the calendar, and the Hebrew language.

Internal Changes

The gradual evolution of a more independent Arab community in Israel catalyzed organizing for political influence and power. It began with the swift growth of civil society organizations: action committees, media channels, religious and self-help groups, and civil rights organizations (Galnoor & Blander, 2013, pp. 942–946). Next came vigorous and determined activism within the local authorities (including challenges to the traditional leadership); independent parties; and recently, the Joint List in the Knesset. Arabs in Israel are divided into many subgroups and identities, but in general they swing between two poles: one is the aspiration for equality and integration in the Israeli (not Jewish) civil society, and the other is separatist, isolationist tendencies. There are also strong internal tensions among the traditional, religious, nationalist, and civil circles within the Arab community. Moreover, changes are affected not only by internal Israeli events and the situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but also by the stormy events in the surrounding Arab and Muslim world.

The Vision Documents, 2006–2007

A sense of alienation gave impetus to several Arab organizations to write different Vision Documents—to forge for the first time a collective credo.¹⁸ These documents, written by academics and intellectuals not identified with the traditional Arab communities or political parties, reveal the desire to take the initiative and to have an impact on the Israeli agenda. The demands in these documents vary, from general recognition of the collective and individual rights of Arab citizens, to cultural autonomy, to recognition of them as a separate national minority, which could lead to reorganizing Israel as a binational state (Jabareen, 2006; Smootha, 2013). Some demands evoked vigorous public discussion in the media and among intellectuals of both communities. Shimon Shamir, a renowned academic and former Israeli ambassador to Egypt and Jordan, expressed the disappointment of many Jews: “It is hard to shake off the feeling that the purpose of your one-sided definition is to strip away the identity of Jews in this land. In your document, the Arabs in Israel appear as a nation, while the Jews appear as a religious or ethnic group. In no place do you recognize the self-determination of the Jews as a nation” (Shamir, 2007). All the Vision Documents stress full civil and national equality, which would “require a change in the constitutional structure and a change in the definition of the State of Israel from a Jewish state to a democratic state based on national and civil

equality between the two national groups, and enshrining the principles of banning discrimination and of equality between all of its citizens and residents” (Mada al-Carmel, 2007, p. 16). In other words, the documents demand recognition of the collective rights of the indigenous Palestinian minority in Israel.

The demands for collective rights are mainly autonomy and the establishment of representative Arab institutions. They appear also as a quest for a “consociational democracy”—that is, arrangements that would give the Arab community their own national institutions and the direct election of Arab representatives to conduct their own affairs.¹⁹ Note that these documents do not propose a binational state outside (Israel–Palestine) or inside the borders of Israel.²⁰ A large majority of the Arab public, however, expressed identification with the ideas in these documents (Smootha, 2013, p. 125).

The demand for political autonomy is the main minefield in these documents, because it reinforces the fears of Jews that the Arabs do not recognize the State of Israel or that the Arabs want one and a half Palestinian states—one in the territories and another, binational half in Israel—leaving only half a Jewish state. Use of the term “colonialism” (in the Hebrew version) plays into the hands of extremist Jews, as does ignoring the Jewish right to self-determination. On the other hand, none of these documents delegitimizes the state of Israel; rather, they reject the notion that the state should belong only to the Jews.

THE NEED FOR A FAIR, COMPREHENSIVE, AND CONSISTENT POLICY

The call for equality is in the interest of both Jews and Arabs. Equally important in the long term is a willingness to cooperate in shaping Israeli democracy. To that end, some Arab citizens must forego the demand for political–national autonomy within Israel, because it contradicts the need to strengthen the common democratic framework; some Jewish citizens must give up their views that the state is doing Arabs a favor by giving them rights or that these rights are conditional upon “loyalty and good behavior.” Citizens are citizens, and the rights of a minority are not bestowed by grace of the majority.

The situation of the Arab community in Israel is still dire. The tenuous relationship between Jews and Arabs is under constant pressure, exacerbated by certain government actions, as previously described. Nonetheless, a change has begun to surface tacitly in the official state approach toward the Arabs, recognizing the justification of equality, particularly in economic terms.²¹ It is confined to Arabs as individual citizens only, not as a distinct community. In contrast, support has grown among Arabs in Israel for realizing their rights as a national collective by virtue of being an indigenous minority.

In my view, the state must recognize the Arabs as a community of Israeli citizens, but not its *separate political–national rights*. In addition to rights as citizens and full

integration into the economy, Arabs in Israel should have collective rights in language, education, culture, and religion. Moreover, Arabs should be entitled to conduct their affairs autonomously, not unlike the ultra-Orthodox in Israel. In both cases, this will require agreements on issues such as a core curriculum in schools and military/civilian service. However, collective rights do not embrace political separatism. Even though Arab citizens are a distinct national minority, their *national* aspirations cannot be realized within the State of Israel. Therefore, elections to a separate representative “parliament” for Arabs in Israel should not be supported, nor should a quota be set for the percentage of Arabs in the Knesset. That will prevent Arabs from voting for Jewish parties or Jews for Arab parties. Israel is a shared country, and the political system should be shared. Local and social entities can be separate or not, at the discretion of each community.

The political crisis in 2019–2020 strengthened the political representation and clout of the Arab citizens. The Joint List won in the 2020 election, with the support of 88 percent of the Arab voters resulting in fifteen seats in the Knesset. Despite the fact that the discriminating barrier prevented its recognition as a legitimate partner in the government coalition, it signaled a positive change in the political status of Arabs in Israel.

NOTES

1. The terms commonly used are controversial semantically and symbolically. Israeli Jews generally refer to “the Arab minority,” “Arab Israelis,” and “the Arab sector”; many Arabs say “Palestinian Arabs in Israel,” “the 1948 Arabs,” or “the 1948 refugees.” In this chapter I refer to “Arab citizens of Israel or “the Arabs in Israel.”
2. This article is based on a chapter from Galnoor and Blander (2013).
3. Self-definition of Arabs in Israel in the 2017 survey: 39 percent Arabs, 34 percent religious (Muslim, Christian, and Druze), 14 percent Palestinians, and 10 percent Israelis (Hermann et al., 2017, p. 2).
4. On the “one-state” or “binational state” solutions, see Rekhess (2008); H. Ghanem (2009); and Bashir (2011). President Trump’s “Peace Plan” (January 28, 2020) proposed stripping the 350,000 Israeli Arab citizens of ten Arab towns in Israel of their Israeli citizenship by transferring them to a future state of Palestine.
5. The term “present absentees” was created in the wake of the Absentee Property Law (1950), which transferred the property left in Israel by Palestinian refugees to the state-appointed custodian for absentee property. Because many of those absent were not living in their hometowns but living in Israel (and counted as residents of other Arab towns), the oxymoron “present absentees” was born.
6. According to Morris (1988), 102,000 Arabs lived in Israel in November 1948 (based on the census), and the Foreign Ministry claims that another 30,000–40,000 Arabs infiltrated into Israel after the census. According to Cohen (2000, p. 22), the Jewish National Fund archives and the State Archive count 23,000 internally displaced Arab refugees in Israel in the early 1950s.
7. The Police Investigations Unit decided not to indict anyone involved, and the Sharon government did not implement the report’s conclusions.

8. On how the Jewish public in Israel constructs its perceptions of the Nakba as reflected in the five major newspapers and on the Nakba Law enacted in 2011, see Jamal and Bsoul (2014).
9. Amendment 40 to the Budget Principles Law (2011) authorizes the finance minister to withdraw funds from a state-supported institution if, among other things, it rejects the existence of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.
10. Data about Arab society are inconsistent. Some do not include the Druze or Bedouin populations of Israel as Arabs; in some studies, “other non-Jews” include non-Arab Christians. And there are political sensitivities about including the Druze of the Golan Heights or the Arabs of East Jerusalem. There is also a tendency to treat “Arabs” as if they were a homogeneous group, without distinguishing among Muslims, Christians, Druze, and Circassians.
11. On other social gaps, see *Equality Index* (Sikkuy, 2006–), which aggregates data on education, health, welfare, employment, and housing; see also Dahan (2007, p. 67); Rudnitzky (2014); and Office of the Prime Minister (2015).
12. In the Labor Party coalition agreements with Hadash and the Arab Democratic Party (July 9, 1992), both Arab parties agreed to support the Rabin government without being coalition members. The main points in the agreement were equalizing the resource allocations for Arab and Jewish municipalities and increased budgets for education, planning and building, welfare, and so forth; The Basic Principles of the Government and Coalition Agreements, 1992 (Galnoor & Hofnung, 1993, pp. 1047–1056).
13. This was done on the initiative of Shmuel Toledano, then adviser for Arab affairs, who recommended that the government should treat Arabs as citizens with equal rights. The author expresses his thanks to Shmuel Toledano for providing this information from a 1974 policy paper.
14. See amendment to the Civil Service (Appointments) Law 2000, mandating the due representation of qualified Arabs, Druze, and Circassians in the civil service.
15. Among these rulings are the following: The High Court overturned the decision of the Central Elections Committee to disqualify the Progressive List for Peace, arguing that its platform identifies with Israel’s enemies (AB 2/84); the High Court also issued a precedent-setting ruling that the state improperly discriminated between Jews and Arabs when it allocated state-owned lands to the Jewish Agency for establishing the community of Katzir for Jews only (HCJ 6698/95 1995 Káadan v. Israel Land Administration et al. PD 54(1) 258 [Hebrew]). In a majority opinion, the High Court instructed municipalities to add Arabic text on outdoor signage (HCJ 4112/99 1999 Adalah and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel v. Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa. PD 56(5) 393 [Hebrew]). Nevertheless, the court accepted the contention that the two languages are not equal in status and that Hebrew has primacy over Arabic. The High Court ruled that the definition of “national priority areas” should not discriminate against Arab localities (HCJ 11163/03 2003 Supreme Monitoring Committee for Arab Affairs in Israel v. Prime Minister of Israel. Retrieved from https://www.nevo.co.il/psika_html/elyon/03111630-a18-e.htm [Hebrew]).
16. Only 10 percent of Jews in Israel reported that they can speak Arabic; 1–3 percent can read Arabic (Shenhav, Dallashi, Avnimelech, Mizrahi, & Mendel, 2015).
17. Some 63 percent of Jews said that Arabs feel that they are not part of Israeli society, and 69 percent of Arabs said that Jews don’t consider them part of Israeli society (Hermann et al., 2017, p. 7). For earlier surveys see Arian et al. (2008, p. 41); and Smooha (2013).

18. The term "Vision Documents" originated from the National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel (2006); see also Jabareen (2006); Adalah (2007); Mada al-Carmel (2007); and Rekhess (2008).
19. The National Committee's document demands equal proportional representation, mutual right to veto, and self-administration of exclusive issues (National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel, 2006, p. 11, article 3).
20. Smootha (2008) regarded it as a smokescreen for "thin binationalism"; Yiftachel (2006) wrote that this refers to cultural autonomy and self-government within a multicultural state.
21. For instance, the general government grant per capita to Arab local authorities has been higher than that to Jewish ones since 1996 and reached an average of +27 percent in 2003–2006 (Ben Bassat & Dahan, 2008, p. 31). Data for 2000 are from Razin (2002).

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CHAPTER 9

RELIGION, SOCIETY, AND POLITICS IN ISRAEL

ASHER COHEN

PROFESSOR Yeshayahu Leibowitz, one of Israel's leading and most provocative intellectuals of the twentieth century, was once asked, "Is Israel a religious or secular state?" His cynical response was that Israel is "a clerical-atheistic regime of the secular state that is commonly known as religious." This was Leibowitz's way of describing a unique and complex situation: there is no separation of religion and state in Israel, yet the state's social and political systems are predominantly secular (Ben-Porat, 2013). The secularization of the public space in Israel is evident in a range of contexts, yet the religious establishment maintains its official status and monopoly.

This chapter focuses on four main aspects of relations among religion, society, and the state. The first section describes religion-state relations in Israel in comparison to the models prevalent in Western democracies. The second section categorizes the components of Jewish society in Israel by attitude toward tradition and religion. The third section focuses on the political system, with a look at the distribution of political parties based on religion and state and on models of accommodational and crisis politics. The fourth section examines two key disputes involving relations among religion, society, and the state: the public nature of the Jewish Sabbath as an expression of the struggle over the public space and the question of the boundaries of the Jewish collective, an issue known in Israel as "who is a Jew."

RELIGION AND STATE IN ISRAEL VERSUS MODELS OF RELIGION AND STATE IN THE WEST

The research literature generally presents six models of religion-state relations, two of them nondemocratic and four that exist in democratic states (Neuberger, 1999). The two

nondemocratic models are polar opposites. At one extreme is the theocratic model, in which all political power is vested in the hands of one religion, its institutions, and its leaders; religious law is the law of the state. At the other extreme are antireligious secular regimes dominated by a secular ideology that rejects and even persecutes all religions. The four other models operate in several variations.

In the *separation model*, the democratic state explicitly anchors the separation of religion and state in its constitution, declares itself neutral on religious issues, or defines itself as secular—not in an antireligious sense, but in the sense that it is not religious. In the American perspective, for example, the state cannot impose any religion on its citizens or adopt a specific religious approach, and it certainly cannot discriminate based on religious affiliation. These prohibitions are designed to protect the freedom of religion of all denominations. Here I note a distinction between separation that is sympathetic to religion and aims to contribute to its free practice, as in the United States, and separation that is hostile to religion, as in the case of France, which recently instituted measures that seem to enforce secularity in the public space.

In the *established church model*, as applied in England and Norway, for example, the state recognizes one religion and one church only as an official, institutionalized church. The state is involved in church affairs by law, and the church is assigned government roles. In England, for instance, the queen or king is the head of the Anglican Church and officially appoints the church's leadership based on the recommendations of the prime minister (Neuberger, 1999, p. 67).

In the *recognized denominations model*, there is no official church or religion with exclusive status, and the recognized religious communities enjoy equality under the law. Unlike in the established church model, the state is not involved in church affairs. However, there is cooperation between the state and churches in various fields, anchored in agreements. In this sense, the model is completely different from the separation model; the state is not disconnected from the churches, and religion is not just a private matter. This model is applied, for example, in Germany and Belgium (Nieuwenhuis, 2012).

The *endorsed church model* can be seen as combining aspects of other models. There is no absolute exclusivity or supremacy as in the established church model, but it also lacks the complete equality of the recognized denominations model. One church is accorded some preference, which can be symbolic and/or legal. Other churches and religions also receive some recognition and support. An example is Italy, where there are aspects of preference and preeminence for the Catholic religion, but taxpayers also fund various activities of other religions.

A key point in understanding the status of the Jewish religion in Israel is the deeply rooted conception that the Jewish religion is uni-national and that the Jewish nation is uni-religious. There is no significant support among the Jewish people for an ethnic-cultural Jewish nation whose national identity is completely severed from aspects of the Jewish religious tradition, in a way that would allow members of other religions to belong to the Jewish nation. The concept "Christian Jew"—that is, someone who is

Jewish in nationhood and Christian in religion—is utterly unacceptable among all Jewish identity groups. In a famous case in 1962, a Jew who converted to Christianity and became a priest sought to register in the population registry as a Jew in his nationhood and as a Christian in his religion. The Israeli Supreme Court rejected his petition, reflecting the prevailing and deep-rooted belief in the Jewish community in Israel that it is impossible for a Jew to also be a Christian by religion (HCJ 72/62 Rufeisen v. Minister of Interior, 1962).

It should be noted at the outset that the main difference between Israel and other democratic states is the question of the degree of freedom of religion and freedom from religion. Democratic states, regardless of the model they adopt, are primarily judged by whether they offer freedom of religion and freedom from religion. In this context, there are central areas in which Israel does not provide freedom from religion.

Israel is very far from the model of separation of religion and state, and it incorporates a mix of characteristics from the recognized denominations and official church models (Neuberger, 1999). For example, the status of Islamic and Druze religious institutions is anchored in law; this expresses recognition of other religions besides Judaism, as in the recognized denominations model. However, the Chief Rabbinate is not only anchored in law, but is accorded broad and exclusive authority vis-à-vis the Jewish population, as in the endorsed church model. In some ways, this also brings to mind the official church model, especially in light of the large Jewish majority in the population.

The substantive point in this question is that Israel maintains a relatively high level of freedom *of* religion but does not offer freedom *from* religion. This is saliently expressed in the fact that Israel is the only democratic state with no provision for civil marriage. The Rabbinic Courts Law stipulates that marriage and divorce can only be conducted in the Orthodox religious format determined by the Chief Rabbinate. Thus, Reform and Conservative Judaism, the largest streams in American Jewry, are not recognized in Israel.

The Chief Rabbinate also enjoys a statutory monopoly in the area of *kashrut* (the dietary laws of Judaism). This monopoly is very powerful considering the fact that more than half of the Jewish population reports keeping kosher to some extent. According to the law, only the Chief Rabbinate is authorized to declare whether a particular food product is “kosher.”

There is currently a battle in Israel over the Chief Rabbinate’s monopoly over conversion to Judaism. In June 2018, a public committee recommended the formation of a government authority on conversion that would be largely independent of the Chief Rabbinate, though the latter would be involved in choosing the officials at the new conversion authority. In any case, conversions conducted privately and not under the auspices of the government would be unrecognized.

This issue of separating religion from the state and freedom from religion is one of the ongoing points of dispute in the religious–secular rift, with the religious and ultra-Orthodox parties on one side and the parties representing secular approaches on the other.

RELIGION AND SOCIETY: ULTRA-ORTHODOX, RELIGIOUS, TRADITIONAL, AND SECULAR

Identity, as we know, is a complicated subject, and this makes it difficult to clearly categorize people. Nonetheless, in public discourse and in the research literature, the Jewish society in Israel is customarily divided into four groups: ultra-Orthodox, religious, traditional, and secular. In recent decades, Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics has divided the traditional group in two (based on different levels of religious affinity) to create five groups (see Table 9.1). Each of the five groups encompasses a range of identities and subgroups.

Table 9.1 indicates that only the ultra-Orthodox group has grown significantly in the twenty-first century, nearly doubling its relative weight in Jewish society. The percentage of Israeli Jews categorized as "traditional, not so religious" has decreased, while the relative size of the other groups has remained stable (the minor changes are within the standard deviation).

Table 9.1 Religiousness among Israeli Jews

Year	Level of Religiousness (% of Those Surveyed)					Total
	Ultra-Orthodox	Religious	Traditional Religious	Traditional, Not So Religious	Not Religious, Secular	
2016	9.8	11.0	12.8	22.3	44.1	100
2015	9.5	10.8	12.0	23.9	43.8	100
2014	9.1	11.0	12.5	23.8	43.6	100
2013	9.1	10.6	13.4	23.4	43.5	100
2012	9.4	10.0	13.7	22.7	44.2	100
2011	8.8	10.1	15.1	23.3	42.7	100
2010	8.8	9.6	13.7	24.4	43.5	100
2009	8.2	11.8	13.3	25.2	41.5	100
2008	8.0	9.8	13.9	26.4	41.9	100
2007	7.8	9.5	13.5	25.6	43.6	100
2006	7.5	9.8	13.8	25.2	43.7	100
2005	6.7	9.8	13.4	25.0	45.1	100
2004	8.0	8.7	11.7	26.7	44.9	100
2003	6.4	9.3	12.3	27.4	44.6	100
2002	5.9	10.0	13.0	28.5	42.6	100

Source: Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (2018).

It is important to note in reference to Jewish society in Israel that a person's affiliation on the religious–secular continuum is increasingly recognized in the research literature as the most accurate predictor on a broad range of topical issues. Self-definition on the religious–secular continuum offers predictive value for almost every significant question in Israeli society. For example, there is a strong correlation between self-definition as religious, traditional, or secular and self-definition as right, center, or left on the right–left continuum. The overwhelming majority of religious and ultra-Orthodox Jews define themselves as right wing to some extent; less than 20 percent define themselves as centrists, and the Left is almost nonexistent among this population group. Conversely, a large majority of those who define themselves as leftists self-affiliate as secular. The “traditional” group is more diverse. This correlation is also evident on specific questions: general attitudes toward democracy, attitudes toward the Arab minority in Israel, attitudes toward judicial activism by the Supreme Court, and so on (Hermann, Cohen, Heller, Lazar-Shoef, & Omar, 2017).

Ultra-Orthodox Jews

The ultra-Orthodox camp began to form in response to secularization processes among the Jewish people in the modern era. Nearly all of the ultra-Orthodox leaders opposed Zionism as a modern national movement of the Jewish people in the nineteenth century (Luz, 1998).

Until the end of the twentieth century, it was customary to categorize the ultra-Orthodox camp according to several characteristics. First was *the ideal of learning Torah*. Most men were expected to devote their lives to studying Jewish sacred texts. For many years, ultra-Orthodox society was described as a “learning society”—that is, a socioeconomic anomaly in which the men devoted their lives to the religious mission without participating in the workforce. Second was *the ideal of strictness*—that is, adhering to the most stringent interpretation of Jewish law. Third was *da'as Torah* (literally “knowledge of Torah”), a social–religious code that expands the religious leadership's authority to all areas of life. Fourth was *separatism and seclusion* from those outside the ultra-Orthodox community, including religious Jews who are not ultra-Orthodox. In this context, Emmanuel Sivan (applying Mary Douglas's theory of cultural bias) describes the ultra-Orthodox society as an “enclave culture” (Douglas, 1978; Sivan, 1991). Fifth was *anti-Zionism* at different levels and magnitudes, primarily due to Zionism's secular character and because it posed an alternative to religious commitment as the core of Jewish identity. The opposition to Zionism took on various forms and became one of the focal points of internal dispute in the ultra-Orthodox camp.

In the twenty-first century, the ultra-Orthodox camp has undergone significant change, which is also reflected in the categorization presented here. The Bank of Israel has consistently reported in recent years that over 50 percent of ultra-Orthodox men are participating in the workforce. Thus, the “learning society” is gradually transitioning to a “learning elite.” There is also another trend that would have been unthinkable in the

twentieth century: more than half of those who define themselves as “ultra-Orthodox” declare that they are “quite Zionist” or “very Zionist” (Hermann, Atmor, Heller, & Lebel, 2012; Hermann, Heller, Cohen, & Bublil, 2015). In addition, an increasing number of ultra-Orthodox men are serving in the Israeli military. Though the number of ultra-Orthodox soldiers is still relatively low, service in the Israeli army was completely taboo in ultra-Orthodox society until the late twentieth century.

These trends are expressed in the term “new ultra-Orthodox,” used to describe the development of a social group in the ultra-Orthodox camp that is moving away from the familiar characteristics of the past and is becoming more like Israel’s Jewish majority in its commitment to Zionism, academization, participation in the workforce, army service, and so on (Zicherman & Cahaner, 2012).

The ultra-Orthodox are represented in the political system by two main parties: United Torah Judaism (an alliance of the Degel Hatorah and Agudat Yisrael parties) and Shas, which primarily represents Mizrahi ultra-Orthodox Jews.

Religious Jews

The term “religious,” as opposed to ultra-Orthodox, refers to a social group characterized by a commitment to religious tradition in its Orthodox form, but without rejecting modernism and its values—in particular, without rejecting Zionism, which comprises a significant component of its identity. This group is often called “national-religious” or “religious-Zionist,” reflecting its salient difference from ultra-Orthodoxy. Furthermore, this group not only embraces Zionism as a national movement, but also attributes religious significance to the State of Israel, which has become part of its religious commitment. Indeed, the sacredness of the state has become a powerful element in religious Zionism (Roth, 2014).

There are three main subgroups within this category. At one end are nationalist ultra-Orthodox Jews, who favor an increasingly strict approach to Jewish law, similar to those categorized as ultra-Orthodox. However, unlike the latter, they have a deep religious commitment to Zionism, and the sacredness of the state is a significant component of their religious identity. At the other extreme are liberal religious Jews, for whom modern values are central in their religious commitment. Some members of this subgroup are called “religious lite” in popular parlance because of their more lenient approach to religious conduct. The silent majority of religious Jews are somewhere between these two poles; on certain issues, they are closer to the nationalist ultra-Orthodox subgroup, and on other issues they identify more with liberal religious Jews (Hermann et al., 2014; Sheleg, 2000).

In the twenty-first century, the national-religious public has split its votes among three political forces: the Jewish Home Party (the current incarnation of the National Religious Party), the Likud Party, and other right-wing parties that appear in each election campaign and usually fail to meet the threshold percentage for entering the Knesset. (For example, this was the fate of the Yahad Party in 2015 and Otzma Leyisrael in 2012.)

After Naftali Bennett rose to leadership in the Jewish Home Party in 2012, a discourse of “replacing the elites” became more prominent in the national-religious public. This discourse views religious Zionism as poised to replace a waning secular Zionist elite in ruling Israel. Bennett has explicitly declared this aspiration on a number of occasions (Cohen & Lazar, 2017).

Traditional Jews

The traditional Jews have a positive attitude toward the religious tradition, but are not religious in the Orthodox sense. One of the popular images of a traditional Jew in Israeli society is that he recites the blessing over the wine (kiddush) at the Sabbath table on Friday evening just as religious Jews do, but watches television after dinner (an activity prohibited on the Sabbath by Jewish law), unlike religious Jews. The traditional Jew occasionally goes to the synagogue for Sabbath prayers on Saturday morning (which religious Jews do regularly and secular Jews rarely do), but then drives to watch a soccer match or goes to a swimming pool (common actions for secular Jews, but forbidden by the Orthodox interpretation of Jewish law that binds religious Jews).

Yadgar (2010) rejects the dichotomous view of traditional versus modern as presented by Graham (1993) and sees traditional Jews in Israel as conducting a faithful dialogic relationship with the tradition, while also taking a critical approach to it. Yadgar returns to the motif of faithfulness versus selective-critical interpretation as a key element in how this group views the traditional component of its self-identity (Yadgar, 2015). Here I note that there is a strong correlation in Israel between a traditional self-definition and Mizrahi ethnic origin. In other words, most traditional Jews are of Mizrahi background, while most secular Jews are of Ashkenazi descent. As elaborated later in this chapter, this is significantly reflected in the distribution of votes for Shas and right-wing parties such as the Likud versus votes for center-left parties such as Labor, Meretz, and Yesh Atid.

Secular Jews

Secularity, particularly in the case of Israel, does not necessarily imply a complete rejection of religious tradition. Such renunciation of Jewish tradition is rare among secular Jews in Israel because of the fundamental and almost undisputed assumption that the Jewish religion is uni-national and the Jewish nation is uni-religious, as noted previously.

This helps to explain a finding in numerous studies on Israeli Jews who define themselves as secular: when asked to describe their level of religious observance, they do not respond “completely unobservant,” which might be expected from secular people in other cultural contexts. Rather, they reply “slightly observant.” That is, a large majority of secular Jews do not identify their secularity with a rejection of religious tradition. Of

the 44 percent who define themselves as secular, only 16 percent say they are “completely unobservant.” In fact, upon closer examination, it seems that this 16 percent figure is misleading, because even those who describe themselves as “completely unobservant” keep some traditions that are rooted in religion—for example, by celebrating religious holidays (albeit not in their religious format).

Susser and Liebman (2004) describe this group as holding on to an ethnic-cultural identity that does not seek to completely sever itself from its religious component, but aspires to reshape the theological components and translate them into elements of culture. The aim is to sustain Jewish existence in all its frameworks, models, and fabrics, but in a contemporary language. In fact, elements from the religious tradition are seen as elements of national identity rather than in their religious context. It should be noted that a secular stream has developed in the twenty-first century. A number of names have been attached to this development, including “Judaism as culture” (Azulay, 2010). This stream is characterized by a return to the traditional Jewish bookshelf, but from a cultural approach.

The question arises: Why do self-defined secular Jews constitute the biggest group in Israel when most of them have a positive connection with religious tradition? Perhaps the explanation is that by defining themselves as secular Jews, many of them are expressing their strong criticism of the Orthodox religious establishment and are rejecting the monopoly it wields in some areas of Israeli life.

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN THE CONTEXT OF RELIGION AND STATE: BETWEEN ACCOMMODATIONAL AND CRISIS POLITICS

Israel has a parliamentary government that relies on a Knesset majority. The electoral system is extremely proportional, with a low threshold percentage of 3.25 percent. Consequently, a large number of parties win Knesset representation. Every Knesset has included at least ten parties, and sometimes there have been as many as fifteen. No party has ever won an absolute majority, so Israel has always had coalition governments with a division of portfolios among a number of parties.

Over the years, Israeli parties have refrained from branding themselves as secular (with a few exceptions, such as the Shinui Party led by Tommy Lapid). However, it is clear which parties have a secular approach that calls for freedom of religion and freedom from religion. In contrast, there have always been parties that have defined themselves as ultra-Orthodox or religious.

Two completely different periods can be identified vis-à-vis the party system in Israel and questions of religion and state. The watershed event dividing the two periods is the political upheaval of 1977, when the Likud Party rose to power for the first time.

The First Period: 1948–1977

The period from 1948 to 1977 was characterized by electoral and functional stability. The ultra-Orthodox camp was represented by Agudat Yisrael, which today operates as the United Torah Judaism Party; it regularly won four to six Knesset seats. The National Religious Party (NRP) represented the religious-Zionist camp and accounted for ten to twelve Knesset seats. No alternative arose to successfully challenge Agudat Yisrael and the NRP during this period. Mapai was the dominant party, regularly winning elections by a large margin over its nearest competitor, and it was clear that Mapai would form the government. To the left of Mapai, there were always parties with more emphatic secular positions, such as Mapam. The NRP was Mapai's regular partner in government coalitions, continuing the "historical alliance" that began during the pre-state era. This collaboration reflected the patterns of accommodation that characterized the political system on questions of religion and state.

The politics of accommodation (Lijphart, 1968, 1969, 1977) addresses the question: In which ways can a democratic society maintain its stability despite and amid a deep rift? Don-Yehiya and other scholars have described the main patterns of accommodational politics that have characterized the relations of religion, society, and state throughout the history of Israel: avoiding clear decisions on religious-secular disputes, refraining from exercising the principle of the majority to implement a secular decision, an inclination to form coalitions that include some or all of the religious parties, shifting disputes to the local level and avoiding decisions at the national level, and preferring bureaucratic solutions to primary legislation (Don-Yehiya, 1997, 2008). It should be noted that during this initial period in Israel, it was politically possible to separate religion and state. Therefore, the politics of accommodation was particularly conspicuous during this period in light of the secular dominance in the social and political spheres.

The Second Period: 1977 and Afterward

In 1977, the party system fundamentally changed when the Likud Party gained power for the first time. This was the harbinger of far-reaching changes in the political system. First, instead of the dominance of a single party (Mapai), there was significant competition for political power, with elections decided by narrow margins. A new political alliance developed between the Likud and the religious and ultra-Orthodox parties. The terms "national camp" and "right-wing bloc" in Israel are today understood to include the Likud and other right-wing lists, as well as the religious and ultra-Orthodox parties. Shas, a Mizrahi ultra-Orthodox party, emerged during this period. It had impressive achievements (ten to seventeen seats in the 1990s) and became the largest religious party.

Scholars disagree about the stability of accommodational politics in Israel. While Don-Yehiya (1997, 2008) argues that the politics of accommodation has continued into

the twenty-first century (at most changing its content, as Malach [2013] contends), Cohen and Susser (2000) describe a transition from accommodational politics to crisis politics. This transition stems from several factors that no longer allow political accommodation to the same extent as in the past. These factors include the rise of judicial activism (and in particular, the feeling prevalent among religious Jews that the court usually rules against them) and the possibility of petitioning against political accommodations; the growing political power of ultra-Orthodox Jewry and the declining power of national-religious Jews, which reinforces conservative ultra-Orthodox positions that make it difficult to reach accommodations in the political system; the immigrations from the former Soviet Union, which included 400,000 new Israelis who are not Jewish according to Orthodox Jewish law, which again raises the question of “who is a Jew” and conversion; and the loss of social and party dominance by secular Jews, who fear that the state is taking on an increasingly religious character (Mautner, 2002).

Israel still wrestles with a wide range of unresolved issues pertaining to religion, society, and state, reflecting its inability to reach stable and consensual solutions. I present several issues here and examine two of them in greater detail in the next pages. First, beginning in the 1950s, ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students were exempt in practice from compulsory military service. In 1998, the High Court of Justice overturned this arrangement, and the issue remains on the public agenda today. In the most recent episode of this saga, in the summer session of the Knesset in 2018 there was another effort to enact legislation on this matter, and the court gave the state an extension to resolve the issue by December 2018. For twenty years, various plans for ultra-Orthodox conscription have been raised, subject to judicial review. Second, in the summer of 2018 the prime minister received proposals for establishing a government authority for conversion. Before the ink dried on these recommendations, a heated debate erupted among various religious factions. Third, the question of the meaning of the Jewish Sabbath in the public sphere is a regular item on the agenda. During 2018, disagreements revolved around conducting infrastructure work on the Sabbath, opening stores, and so on. Fourth, in recent years the term “religionization” (*hadata*) has featured prominently in the public discourse. Secular Jews complain that religious components are being introduced and strengthened in certain spaces at the expense of freedom from religion—for example, in school curricula and the exclusion of women at certain events.

THE MAIN DISPUTES IN THE RELATIONS OF RELIGION, SOCIETY, AND POLITICS

The religious–secular divide comprises a wide range of disagreements. Here I focus on two central disputes: (1) the “who is a Jew” question, including the issue of conversion, which illustrates the tension between the national and religious dimensions when defining the boundaries of the Jewish collective; and (2) the question of the meaning of the

Jewish Sabbath, which illustrates the disagreements on the character of the public space. It should be emphasized that both of these disputes have appeared throughout Israel's history, including in the twenty-first century.

Who Is a Jew and the Conversion Issue

The dispute over the boundaries of the Jewish collective clearly illustrates the tension and gap between the secular and religious approaches and among various approaches of religious streams in the Jewish world. The Law of Return originally entitled any Jew to immigrate to Israel, but refrained from defining a Jew for the purpose of this entitlement. The absence of a definition led to repeated disagreements.

In 1958, Interior Minister Yisrael Bar-Yehuda from the Ahdut Ha'avoda Party instructed the ministry's officials to register any child as a Jew if so requested by both of his immigrant parents, as long as one of his parents was a Jew. This blatantly ethnic-cultural view did not place importance on whether the Jewish parent was the mother or the father. It also drew from the Zionist perspective: the very fact that the parents had immigrated to Israel meant that they were joining the Jewish collective.

The minister's directive sparked the first crisis on this issue. According to Orthodox Jewish law, a Jew is only someone who was born to a Jewish mother or who converted to Judaism under Orthodox auspices. Thus, the directive to register the children of a Jewish father (and non-Jewish mother) as Jews ran counter to Jewish law. The NRP quit the coalition, and an ongoing crisis developed in Israel and the Jewish world. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion turned to fifty Jewish sages for consultation on this matter.

In the end, the episode was addressed through classic patterns of accommodation politics (Don-Yehiya, 2002). The law was not amended, and the term "Jew" remained undefined. After the elections of 1959, the Interior Ministry portfolio was transferred to the NRP, and the new interior minister, Haim-Moshe Shapira, immediately issued new directives in accordance with his religious worldview.

Another crisis, this time in the late 1960s, led the Supreme Court to rule that the two children of an Israeli Defense Forces officer should be registered as Jews, even though their mother was not Jewish. Against this background, a significant amendment was made to the Law of Return, which until then had refrained from defining the term "Jew." The amendment enacted in 1970 stipulated that a Jew is "someone born to a Jewish mother, or who converted, and is not a member of another religion." This clearly reflects the Orthodox view, though it leaves the question of conversion open because it does not refer to a specific type of conversion.

A family clause that applies to a Jew's non-Jewish relatives was also added to the law, and this change is even more important for understanding the events of the twenty-first century. The law now stipulated that not only a Jew (as defined in the amended law) has the right to immigrate to Israel, but also the "spouses of Jews, the children of Jews and their spouses, and the grandchildren of Jews and their spouses."

When the Soviet Union collapsed and the gates of the former Soviet bloc opened, a wave of mass immigration to Israel began. It is important to emphasize that in those countries there was a particularly high rate of intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews. The family clause, which had had little practical impact before 1990, took on great significance. In some years, it was reported that immigrants arriving in Israel under the family clause outnumbered Jewish immigrants.

According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, there are currently 400,000 "others" living in Israel, most of them listed as having "no religious affiliation": immigrants and their descendants, who comprise more than 4 percent of Israeli society. In a wide range of aspects pertaining to what is perceived as national affiliation, the overwhelming majority of these "others" are an integral part of the Jewish collective in Israel. They live within the Jewish collective, have Jewish relatives, identify as part of the Jewish collective, display strong patriotism, serve in the Israeli army, and so forth. However, from the perspective of religious law, they are not Jews. Thus, I refer to them as "non-Jewish Jews" (Cohen, 2006).

In practice, the boundaries of the Jewish collective are determined by social and national processes, not according to the official definition in the Law of Return, which is close to the religious definition. The process can be described as follows: While the question of "who is a Jew" was a theoretical argument with relatively few practical repercussions until the end of the twentieth century, the question has now become a major challenge affecting hundreds of thousands of people whose status is complicated and complex. Indeed, this is the most salient and extensive complication in the entanglement of religion and nation in the Jewish society.

In this context, I should also mention the Rabbinical Courts Law, which is the most salient expression of the lack of separation of religion and state. The law stipulates that "marriage and divorce will be conducted according to Torah law." (This applies only to Jews, of course. Members of other religions have their own state-sanctioned courts that deal with these issues.) The institution that is solely responsible for implementing this stipulation is the Chief Rabbinate, which oversees the rabbinical courts. In regard to personal status, religious law is thus accepted as the law of the state and is binding upon all—thus denying Israelis freedom from religion. And those hundreds of thousands of people registered as having "no religious affiliation" cannot marry in the framework of the Rabbinical Courts Law (unless they go through Orthodox conversion) because they are not considered Jews.

These developments introduced dramatic urgency to the issue of conversion. There is a well-established understanding in Jewish society that a person can only join the Jewish collective through conversion. A small group advocates allowing newcomers into the collective without conversion, but the overwhelming majority, including secular Jews, does not recognize any option other than conversion. The religious-secular dispute centers on the type of conversion.

On one side are those advocating for conversion through any of the streams of Judaism, including Reform and Conservative conversions. This position is absolutely rejected by all shades of the Orthodox spectrum, including both the ultra-Orthodox

and religious. On the other side, the ultra-Orthodox stance discourages conversion and conducts conversions only when it is clear that the converts will maintain an Orthodox lifestyle after the conversion. Between these two positions are various ideas that differ in their level of openness toward conversion in light of the new challenge. This also became one of the subjects of fiercest dispute within the national-religious camp. Conservatives who identify with the nationalist ultra-Orthodox Jews are more inclined to the ultra-Orthodox position on this issue, while those of a more liberal bent prefer to address this challenge by expanding conversion to overcome the disparity between the national status and religious status of the immigrants and their children.

In a recent development in this saga, a committee chaired by former Likud minister Moshe Nissim submitted a new plan for conversion in June 2018. As mentioned previously, the plan calls for the creation of an independent government authority for conversion. Publication of the plan stirred heated controversy among rabbis across the religious spectrum, and the debate continues.

The Public Character of the Jewish Sabbath

At any given moment in Israeli politics since the creation of the state, one can always find struggles over the Sabbath. The circumstances and context change, but the Sabbath struggles are ubiquitous. Israel expresses itself as a Jewish state by marking the Jewish Sabbath and Jewish holidays as official days of rest, and there is broad consensus on this in Jewish society. (Incidentally, the law on this subject is named the Hours of Work and Rest Law, a neutral description, rather than the Sabbath and Jewish Holidays Law. One of the reasons for this is that some religious Israelis preferred the neutral name because of the law's compromises from the perspective of strict Orthodox observance.)

The dispute over the public character of the Sabbath includes several subissues. One central issue is the opening of places of recreation or shopping centers on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. From a religious perspective, the Sabbath and Jewish holidays are not only days of rest, but also days that express the "sacred" versus the "mundane." An understanding of the character of the Sabbath from a religious perspective can be gained by observing the public space in ultra-Orthodox cities or in religious neighborhoods and communities in general. Not a single store is open, and the streets are completely empty because traveling in a car is not only forbidden, but has become a symbol of Sabbath observance or nonobservance.

One of the creative solutions proposed for this quandary was the Authorization Law, which empowered localities to prohibit or permit the opening of places on the Sabbath. Delegating the decision to the local authorities enables each locality to develop in a way that best suits the community and its demography. Thus, Tel Aviv, the symbol of secularism in Israel, is open, while large areas of Jerusalem are completely closed on the Sabbath.

In the twenty-first century, several flashpoints have emerged in the Sabbath battle. One of these entails an ongoing dispute over the opening of supermarkets on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. Here it should be emphasized that recreational sites are

open in most parts of Israel. Ben-Porat (2013) found in regard to sites open on the Sabbath that a process of secularization has occurred in the public space in Israel. It is equally noteworthy that there is no dispute over closing workplaces such as factories and workshops on the Sabbath. But what about supermarkets? Throughout the second decade of the twenty-first century, an argument has raged over whether, and to what extent, supermarkets should be allowed to open on the Sabbath—and the question remains unresolved.

Another fascinating point of friction involves various infrastructure projects undertaken by the state. Naturally, from the state's perspective, it is best to perform major infrastructure work on the official rest days. Shutting down trains or clogging roads by transporting heavy equipment is better suited for rest days than for regular workdays. However, such work by the state on the Sabbath is prohibited by Jewish religious law, and many religious Israelis cannot accept the state authorizing this work. However, shifting this work to a weekday means creating enormous traffic jams or shutting down train service. This issue has arisen repeatedly during the current government's term, and no solution is in sight.

RELIGION, POLITICS, AND STATE: 2019–2020 ELECTIONS

The three consecutive electoral campaigns of 2019–2020 highlight many of the issues presented in this chapter. The three campaigns focused mainly on two key issues. The first issue involves the investigations of suspicions of criminal offences committed by Prime Minister Netanyahu. Those suspicions culminated in the state attorney general's announcement of his intention to indict Netanyahu (February 2019) and then the decision to press charges (November 2019). Second was Netanyahu's announcement in September 2019 that, if elected, he would annex the Jordan River valley, and support for this was given in US President Trump's "Peace Plan" (January 2020). The three electoral campaigns all ended without a clear winner, a situation that finally led to the formation of a national unity government based on an agreement between the leaders of the two largest Knesset lists, the Likud and Blue and White; the latter list had split into two factions after the 2020 election, with the minority refusing to join the coalition government. Hence, we focus on issues of religion, society, and state that were expressed during this tumultuous period of political instability.

Religious, social, and state issues were debated throughout the extended electoral period and were particularly prominent in the second (September 2019) election. At that time, Avigdor Lieberman, the leader of Yisrael Beiteinu Party, led an aggressive secular line. Again and again he repeated the claim that Netanyahu would establish a "halakhic government." Netanyahu's religious partners were labeled by Lieberman as "Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) and Messianic." That term referred to the two ultra-Orthodox

parties—United Torah Judaism and Shas—together with the right-wing parties representing religious Zionism. The ultra-Orthodox parties, on their part, called Lieberman's tactics open anti-Haredi sedition and by doing so gave Lieberman more exposure and credibility within secular circles.

The anti-Haredi campaign and the focus on a secular, non-Haredi government turned out to be an electoral bonanza for Lieberman. He dragged the Blue and White campaign into adopting a "Secular Unity Government" slogan. Despite trying to appeal to the secular vote, while being aware of the growing rift within the religious camp between the liberal and national ultra-Orthodox, the Blue and White party also tried to draw middle-of-the-road religious voters, albeit with limited success.

In the first two elections, Yisrael Beiteinu was the party that increased its relative strength more than any other, from five seats in April to eight seats in September 2019. Its success was clearly evident within the highly secular, affluent population. The trend was unmistakable: the richer the socioeconomic cluster, the larger Yisrael Beiteinu's increase in its relative share of the vote. In Israel, high socioeconomic status mainly overlaps with a veteran population of Ashkenazi origin. Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics classifies ten socioeconomic clusters, with cluster 10 the highest. Yisrael Beiteinu's share in cluster 8 rose from 1.6 to 5.5 percent; in cluster 9, it increased from only 0.7 to 4.3 percent; and in cluster 10 it increased from 0.7 to 5.4 percent (Hoffman-Dishon, 2019).

In the various religious camps, there is a huge gap between the two ultra-Orthodox and the religious Zionist parties. The two ultra-Orthodox parties combined were able to secure sixteen Knesset seats in each of the three electoral campaigns. Even within the unity government that emerged in 2020, they are a key player without which no coalition could exist. In stark contrast to the ultra-Orthodox's political stability, the processes of religious cultural fragmentation within religious Zionism was reflected in the many internal partisan divisions and in political marginality. In April 2019, a new party, the New Right, headed by Naftali Bennett, failed to pass the electoral threshold, while the Union of Right-Wing Parties won only five seats. As September 2019 approached, the national-religious camp formed an alliance of three different parties—the Jewish Home, the National Union, and the New Right—called Yamina, led by Ayelet Shaked, and won seven seats. In March 2020, Yamina, led this time by Naftali Bennett, won six seats. To add insult to injury, Rabbi Rafi Peretz, number two on the Yamina list and head of the Jewish Home Party, split to join the unity government as a minister, while the other parties within the Yamina alliance were relegated to the opposition.

Against the backdrop of these three elections, the nexus of religion, society, and politics can be summarized by looking at several key points. First, the anti-Haredi campaign had considerable success among segments of the secular public. Second, and contrary to the first point, a narrow government without the support of the ultra-Orthodox was an unrealistic possibility—largely because of the delegitimization of the Joint List (represented almost entirely by Arab Knesset members) as a possible coalition partner. Third, unlike the two ultra-Orthodox parties that showed remarkable success and stability, the

parties affiliated with religious Zionism suffered from chronic weakness and fragmentation whose end cannot be seen anytime soon.

CONCLUSION

Toward the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, which also marks the conclusion of the State of Israel's seventh decade, one can make two contradictory statements. On the one hand, nothing seems to have changed, and the same problems occupy the society and the state in the area of religion and state. On the other hand, the society and state have undergone enormous change, some of which can be described as fundamental.

When examining the various issues, we can almost keep the headlines from the 1950s and 1960s and just change the details: for example, the question of "who is a Jew," entailing a dispute over the boundaries of the Jewish collective (HCJ 72/62 Rufeisen v. Minister of Interior, 1962) and the question of conversion; battles over the Sabbath that regularly erupt, each time in a different area pertaining to the public character of the Sabbath; and the conscription of yeshiva students, a contentious issue that has been deliberated in the High Court since 1970. In this way, one could move from one subject to the next and identify them as recurrent issues that regularly appear on the public agenda, as if nothing has changed.

Nonetheless, extensive changes have occurred in several contexts. For example, contrary to the claim of "religionization," it turns out that despite having governments led by the Likud and the religious parties, the public space has undergone secularization in a number of fields. In another context, some ultra-Orthodox Jews, who have always been the ultimate "others" in Jewish society—different, distant, and reclusive—are experiencing significant processes of change.

It therefore appears that Israeli society can expect a complex combination of continuity and change in the future. On the one hand, issues such as "who is a Jew," the Sabbath, and the status of the ultra-Orthodox will repeatedly arise. On the other hand, they will arise in new contexts and in changing circumstances and conditions. This mix will create a unique model of religion–state relations that does not include separation, as is customary in most democratic states in the West, and incorporates various components from the different models, adapting them to the Israeli reality.

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CHAPTER 10

IMMIGRATION DYNAMICS AND CHANGING CONSTRUCTIONS OF JEWISH NATIVENESS IN ISRAEL

ADANE ZAWDU AND SARAH S. WILLEN

A fundamental building block of Zionist nation-state building is the claim of a primordial link between modern-day Jews and the people and territory of ancient Israel (Peled & Herman Peled, 2019). Although this claim stands in tension with understandings of Palestinian indigeneity in the region, it has proven remarkably durable, even though it has taken various forms since the earliest days of the Zionist movement (Shafir & Peled, 2002). Bolstering this claim are particular understandings of Jewish nativeness and collectivity, including assertions that all Jews (1) share a common origin narrative, (2) possess an exclusive connection with the ancient land of Israel, and (3) share this connection despite notable ethnonational differences (Kimmerling, 2001). By presenting the creation of modern Israel as a collective return to an ancient homeland and the actualization of a birthright, the Zionist movement cast Jewish nativeness as both natural and self-evident (Ram, 2011). This conception of nativeness continues to undergird a profound cultural and political preoccupation with the boundaries of membership in the Jewish collective, with far-reaching political, social, and cultural effects.

In this chapter we explore how the notion of Jewish nativeness has been constructed, reconstructed, and mobilized as a defining criterion for membership and a defining aspect of social position in Israel. We approach Zionist assertions of Jewish nativeness as a case of group formation and consider Jewish nativeness as a particular site of boundary work and the solidification of groupness (Brubaker, 2009; Lamont et al., 2016). In so doing, we take a relational perspective that shifts scholarly attention from “groups” to ongoing processes of “group making” and, in particular, to the various practices and relations that shape social boundaries and their consequences for social life.

Building on this theoretical framework, we observe how diverse stakeholders have deployed claims of Jewish nativeness in constructing notions of ethnonational membership under changing demographic conditions. Since the pre-state era, but especially since its formal establishment in 1948, Israel has been a destination for diverse migrant groups from all over the world, each arriving for different reasons (Cohen, 2009). These successive waves of migration have increased the country's ethnic and religious heterogeneity, which in turn has changed its social makeup and generated new tensions and contradictions that have influenced, and often limited, newcomers' opportunities for incorporation into Israeli society (Kemp, Newman, Ram, & Yiftachel, 2004).

In this chapter we explore relations between newcomers and established groups in four distinct periods. The first, pre-state period, or *Yishuv*, involved the migration of European Jews during the formative years of nation-state building and the flourishing of romanticized notions of Jewish nativeness. During the second period, the 1950s and 1960s, Jews migrated from Arab, North African, and Middle Eastern countries, and a stratified intra-Jewish ethnic hierarchy emerged, as did tensions around the notion of Jewishness as an equalizing criterion. In the third period, the early 1990s, migrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia arrived in large numbers, and various forms of boundary work led to the incorporation of Jews whose religious status was rabbinically contested. Finally, the mid-1990s and 2000s saw the arrival of global migrants and asylum seekers who, as neither Jews nor Arabs, have been constructed as largely unassimilable "Others."

Overall, this chapter illuminates the constructivist processes involved in the perpetual making and remaking of Jewish conceptions of nativeness in Israel, as well as their durability. We show how the meaning and pragmatic implications of Jewish nativeness have continued to serve as a powerful cultural mechanism in organizing in-group coherence and relations even as they have undergone significant change. The complex matter of migration motives, which has received concerted attention from other scholars (cf. Shapira, 2012; Gitelman, 2001; Hachohen, 2003; Kaplan & Rosen, 1994; Kemp & Rajjman, 2008), lies beyond the scope of our analysis.

EUROPEAN JEWISH EXPERIMENTATION WITH NATIVENESS IN THE PRE-STATE ERA (YISHUV)

Between 1882 and Israel's establishment in 1948, about half a million Jewish immigrants from Western and Eastern Europe migrated to Palestine. Although associated with different social movements and ideological stances, these immigrants tended to view their ties to Palestine through an ethno-religious interpretive frame (Kimmerling, 2001). The number of Jews in the region rose from about thirty thousand at the end of the nine-

teenth century to just over half a million on the eve of 1948. Their arrival dramatically changed the demographic composition of the region and transformed indigenous Palestinians from a robust majority into a minority (Kimmerling, 2001).

The formalized “settlement,” or *Yishuv*, founded by these early European Jewish immigrants marked a critical break from the social and political organization of the older and much smaller Jewish communities that had long existed in various parts of Palestine/Eretz-Yisrael. Although their motives for migration and national background varied, these European immigrants’ political and cultural practices contributed significantly to early processes of nation-state building (Shafir & Peled, 2002). In specific, the political structures and cultural organizations they formed would soon become the infrastructure of an independent Jewish national state (Kimmerling, 2001). Although intent on building a modern and secular nation-state, these European immigrants nonetheless drew heavily on primordial claims and biblical notions of nativeness in asserting modern-day Jews’ collective ties to the land and to one other (Even-Zohar, 1981; Zerubavel, 1995).

At the same time, European immigrants’ orientalist perspective on “the east” generated ambivalence about the possibility of settling in Palestine (Shenhav, 2006). On the one hand, they drew on European frameworks of orientalism and modernism (Said, 1978) that cast the local landscape, people, and culture of Palestine as backward and in need of transformation and modernization. On the other hand, they saw the opportunity to migrate as a chance not only for Jewish national self-determination, but also to transform stigmatized and oppressed diasporic Jews into sovereign natives (Shapira, 2012). These two poles marked the ends of a spectrum of mixed identification regarding both the act of migration and immigrants’ new place of residence.

In this period, European immigrants’ constructions of Jewish nativeness unfolded in multiple spheres. In the cultural sphere, Zionist leaders created new rubrics for naming and organizing new state institutions, historical knowledge, collective time and space, and even the natural world (Zerubavel, 1995; Ram, 2016; Bardenstein, 1998). A key site for the production of nativeness was the revival of the Hebrew language. In addition to its “relocation” from the religious domain to secular, national public space (Kimmerling, 2001), Hebrew’s revival and reinvigoration involved the standardization and homogenization of various dialects into a preferred Sephardi dialect, which was imagined to be more “authentic” (Ram, 2016). Use of this new, ideal form was not merely encouraged, but also policed. The “war of languages” (Ram, 2016) that ensued involved a struggle against immigrants’ use of “foreign” languages in everyday life and institutional contexts and the stigmatization of various accents as “foreign.” In the scholarly domain, institutional and epistemological support for claims of Jewish nativeness was drawn from various fields of scientific inquiry. For example, archaeological research was deployed to demonstrate the antiquity of past Jewish existence, name it accordingly, and affirm links between the contemporary and ancient biblical landscapes (Abu El-Haj, 2001).

These forms of cultural production drew on two interrelated sources: a reconstructed biblical Jewish past and romanticized conceptions of local indigenous Arabs. Each

offered both a model and an inspiration for the performance and subjective experience of nativeness, and each served as a symbolic bridge to a deep-rooted image of ancient Jewish nativeness (Zerubavel, 2008; Eyal, 2006). Not only did theological myths and biblical narratives undergird these forms of identity work in the Yishuv, but they also provided ancient terms that could be revived and invested with new secular interpretations in a manner that left a religious imprint on new and emerging cultural forms (Peled & Herman Peled, 2019). The category of the “Hebrew,” for instance, was reinvented to signify a locally rooted self whose national membership was detached from religion. Likewise, the idealized “sabrá,” referring to the locally ubiquitous prickly pear, captured the aspiration to emerge as an assertive new Jewish subject rooted in the local landscape (Oz, 2002). These new identity categories, along with other more fringe notions such as the “Canaanite” (Hofmann, 2011), emerged in an atmosphere of relatively fluid everyday interaction between early Zionist settlers and indigenous Arabs. These new identities, among them the “Hebrew Bedouin” (Zerubavel, 2008), sometimes involved the appropriation of indigenous Arabs’ habits, cultural practices, and forms of dress (Even-Zohar, 1981; Eyal, 2006).

Other key sites involved the transformation of bodies, tastes, and patterns of movement through national space. The Jewish body, especially the male body, became a site for the construction of locally rooted conceptions of nativeness drawing on biblical images of Jewish masculinity (Presner, 2007). Patterns of food consumption among Jews shifted (Hirsch, 2011) to privilege local “eastern” tastes, which were recast as status signifiers facilitating European immigrants’ transformation into ideal native subjects. And like eating, “walking the land” came to be mediated by symbolic notions of nativeness, including the common choice to wear simple, leather “biblical sandals” (El Or, 2012).

By the 1930s experiments with nativeness had declined, due in part to the increasing institutionalization of pre-state structures (Kimmerling, 2001) as well as the intensification of conflicts between Arabs and Jews, some involving violence. Arabness was gradually transformed from an ambivalent but sometimes idealized model for Jewish nativeness into an enemy category, and Arabness and Jewishness sedimented in the collective imagination into a mutually exclusive set of oppositional categories (Shenhav, 2006; Eyal, 2006). Similarly, the proto-national bureaucratic structure of the Yishuv, which had encouraged various degrees of political inclusion and participation (Herzog, 1986) and tolerated diverse forms of Jewish expression, receded as a centralized state structure took its place.

The 1948 war marked the end of this period, and its aftermath included the rise of Zionist political control as well as demographic displacements and transformations that resulted in a Jewish majority and a Palestinian Arab minority. By that point, efforts to construct and articulate Jewish nativeness had shifted from an array of semi-autonomous organizations, groups, and actors to the institutions of a formalized nation-state that sought to standardize and monopolize a collective national narrative of belonging.

MIDDLE EASTERN JEWISH MIGRATION AND THE ERECTION OF NEW SOCIAL BOUNDARIES

Post-1948 immigration brought additional ethnic heterogeneity to the newly declared nation-state as the Jewish population doubled to 1.3 million people in about four years. Precipitating factors included not only growing tensions between the state of Israel and neighboring Arab countries, but also active efforts by Zionist organizations to encourage the immigration of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust as well as Jews from the Middle East and North Africa (Shenhav, 2006). By the late 1960s European Jews had become a numeric minority within the broader Jewish population (Kimmerling, 2001), but they continued to control the primary mechanism for defining and policing social boundaries: state bureaucracy. Institutions like the law, the educational system, and the census played especially critical roles in both the classification of individuals and groups and the enactment and enforcement of boundaries between them (Leibler, 2016; Shenhav, 2006).

In these early years of mass migration and state formation, Israel passed its essential immigration laws. Chief among them are the Law of Return (1950) and the Citizenship Law (1952), which institutionalized the Zionist claim to Jewish nativeness and formally established the criteria for sociopolitical inclusion (Hacohen, 2003). The Law of Return grants every Jew the right to migrate to Israel and obtain citizenship, and the Citizenship Law binds the path to citizenship to the notion of a Jewish birthright, regardless of one's country of origin. Laws created in this period to regulate the entry of non-Jews include the Entry into Israel Law (1952) and the Prevention of Infiltration Law (1954).

The codification of Jewishness as both a condition of membership and a path to citizenship symbolically blurred the spatial and temporal differences between Jews in Israel and those living elsewhere. By this logic, all Jews stand in horizontal relationship to one another as equal bearers of a "natural" right to formal membership, and new Jewish immigrants (*olim*) are already connected to both the Jewish collective and the land of ancient Israel. As a result, the act of migration—*aliyah* (Hebrew for ascent)—is understood in ideologically loaded terms as the actualization of a right that already existed in potential.

A different logic was applied to indigenous Palestinians living within the state's boundaries. Their status was defined by a track in the Citizenship Law created for non-Jews, which granted them Israeli citizenship, but in a manner that sharply limited their participation, downplayed their ties to the land, and characterized them as an external threat to the imagined national collective (Jamal, 2011). Despite their formal membership, Palestinian citizens of Israel were subject to military administration until 1966. The vast majority of Palestinians who were displaced or expelled as a result of the 1948 war, in contrast, were excluded from the possibility of authorized residence or inclusion within the state.¹

Turning Arabness into a signifier of otherness and the demarcation of an us/them distinction has also affected intra-Jewish dynamics. Among Jewish immigrants, an unofficial intra-Jewish ethnic hierarchy soon emerged in which Jews of European origin were granted significant advantages over Jews with origins in Arab countries or other non-European locales (Khazzoom, 2008; Smootha, 1978). Not only did these unequal relations create tension among Jews and produce gaps between formal and substantive citizenship, but they also undermined the cultural narratives of equality and Jewish egalitarianism recently enshrined in law. Practices of stratification and differentiation enacted by state agencies, which were dominated by pre-1948 European immigrants, placed more recent, non-European immigrants at a significant disadvantage in areas as diverse as housing, health, education, employment, and cultural representation (Shenhav, 2006; Khazzoom, 2008). These practices supported the eventual differentiation of the country's diverse Jewish residents into two unequal groupings: "Europeans," or Ashkenazim, and "Orientals," or Mizrahim (Shohat, 1999).

At the level of symbolic and cultural representation, constructions of nativeness shifted as well. In this period, the figure of the sabra underwent a process of transformation from a non-ethnic marker of Jewish nativeness into a more specific indicator of a particular kind of Ashkenazi nativeness (Shafir & Peled, 2002). This modified conception of the sabra, which became linked to the pioneer ethos associated with earlier European immigrants, came to serve as a symbolic boundary between old and new immigrant groups that ranked their relative national contributions and justified privileged status for European immigrants who had arrived in the pre-state period (Shafir & Peled, 2002). Not only were survivors of the Shoah who arrived post-1948 disadvantaged in this framework, but Mizrahi Jews were portrayed disparagingly as backward subjects in need of modernization (Khazzoom, 2008). Many new Jewish immigrants brought the Arabic language and Middle Eastern cultural practices from their countries of origin, but the orientalist underpinnings of the new country's stratified ethnic structure created stigma and social pressure to shed these features. Furthermore, as Arabness increasingly came to signify the "enemy," the possibility of being both Arab and Jew effectively became unthinkable to most Israelis.

In time, various forms of political opposition arose to protest these sustained patterns of discriminatory treatment. In the 1950s and again in the 1970s, Mizrahi activists organized significant protests. These mobilizations, including the Wadi Salib demonstrations in the 1950s and the (Israeli) Black Panthers movement in the 1970s (Shalom Chetrit, 2010; Roby, 2015), yielded a limited degree of institutional change and greater political representation the late 1970s and 1980s (Shafir & Peled, 2002). Many of these protests and resulting social changes were framed as responses to tensions between the country's inclusive discourse of Jewish belonging and the reality of persistent discrimination. Most protests called for equality and full inclusion of all Jewish co-nationals, invoking the logic of homophily encoded in national symbols, narratives, and state policies (Mizrachi, 2016). In effect, this protest strategy tended to strengthen existing national symbols and narratives and their underlying ethno-religious principles rather than challenge them. In the late 1980s protest strategies expanded to include alternative,

more expansive notions of Jewish nativeness and belonging in which difference was valued (Shalom Chetrit, 2010). One expression of this critique has involved the emergence of “Arab-Jewishness” as an identity category among a small number of Mizrahim (Shenhav, 2006).

These counterhegemonic developments notwithstanding, the unequal relationship between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim has continued to influence political and cultural dynamics in Israel (Mizrachi, 2016; Weingrod, 2018). The emergence of a distinct Mizrahi identity in this period, and associated struggles, contributed to a rise in identity politics and a push for public and civic recognition not only of distinct identities, but also of persistent social inequalities (Ben-Eliezer, 2004).

In this period, established notions of Jewish sameness and equality shifted, giving rise to conflicting understandings of nativeness. Newer understandings hinged on a clear temporal boundary between pre-state and post-state migration, and they contributed to tensions between formal and substantive dimensions of Jewish membership—and moreover, between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim. At the same time, social protests by Mizrahi activists revealed how notions of Jewish nativeness and membership can also function, both formally and informally, as a social contract that ordinary individuals can defend or invoke in an effort to hold the nation-state accountable.

THE DIVERSIFICATION OF JEWISHNESS: IMMIGRATION FROM ETHIOPIA AND THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

In the 1990s conceptions of nativeness shifted again with the arrival of two additional groups of Jewish immigrants in Israel, one from the former Soviet Union and the other from Ethiopia. The contested political dynamics previously described were playing out at the time of both groups’ arrival. Eventually these dynamics crystallized into what Ben-Eliezer (2004) has called “post-hegemonic Israel,” characterized by a weakening of hegemonic structures and the growth of civic spaces for the public recognition of social and cultural difference.

By all standards, the cultural and political influence of Russian-speaking immigrants was dramatic (Kimmerling, 2001). As their numbers reached one million, comprising nearly 20 percent of the overall Jewish population, immigrants from the former Soviet Union influenced diverse cultural and political fields, and their arrival led to the establishment of new cultural institutions and political parties (Gitelman, 2016). Their arrival also illustrates a notable shift: an institutional reframing of Jewishness as a condition of belonging. Approximately one-third of these immigrants were able to immigrate to Israel as the result of a 1970 amendment to the Law of Return.² The amendment’s inclusionary dimension extended citizenship to the kin—parents, grandparents, spouse or

spouse's parents, and grandparents—of anyone recognized as Jewish by the (Orthodox) rabbinical authorities. This legal change facilitated the political inclusion of hundreds of thousands of individuals who were not Jewish according to Orthodox religious criteria, but who were granted formal standing and access to naturalization because they could demonstrate a “bureaucratically legible” tie to the Jewish people (Willen, 2019).

Immigration from Ethiopia, in contrast, took place under different circumstances and had different cultural and political effects. The arrival of about fifteen thousand immigrants in the early 1990s, the largest group to arrive from Ethiopia since the first state-organized mission in 1977, marked the end of migration from Ethiopia under the Law of Return.³ This migration spurred political and religious conversations regarding the possibility of including the nonrabbinical category of “black Jews” and the legitimization of that category within recognized boundaries of normative Jewishness (Seeman, 2009). After decades of contestation, and despite epistemological tensions stemming from modern views of the relationship between somatic differences and kin relations, immigrants from Ethiopia were folded into the prevailing narrative of a common, primordial Jewish origin. In a 1973 halachic ruling that came to define both formal and folk perceptions, the Sephardic chief rabbi declared Ethiopians were descendants of the biblical tribe of Dan and possessed the right of return and access to the same naturalization pathway as other Jews (Corinaldi, 1998).

The incorporation of both categories of immigrants was facilitated by cultural and institutional processes involving the re-examination of boundaries of Jewish belonging. In both cases, these reflective exercises contributed to a shift in the organizing principles of formal and cultural Jewish membership (Yonah & Goodman, 2004). Chief among these developments was a widening gap between the normative and formal modes of classification advanced by the Orthodox rabbinical authorities, on the one hand, and broader political and sociocultural understandings of Jewish belonging, on the other. Yet the forms of boundary change differed between the two immigrant groups. The inclusion of nonrabbinical Jews from the former Soviet Union involved a change in the formal principle of inclusion—a *boundary shift* (Wimmer, 2013)—that reconfigured the definition and limits of Jewish membership. The inclusion of Ethiopian immigrants, on the other hand, was articulated through a biblical framework that employed pre-existing conceptions of Jewish membership and boundaries, thereby leaving formal rabbinical principles intact while enabling individual-level forms of *boundary crossing* (Wimmer, 2013). This differential process of incorporation has had a long-term impact on how both groups understand and relate to their sociopolitical position in Israel (Zawdu, 2016; Lerner, 2015).

Beyond these shifts enabling their political inclusion as co-ethnics, both groups were presented with the opportunity to undergo formal Jewish conversion under Orthodox rabbinic supervision. For state authorities, Orthodox conversion was viewed not only as a way to “fix” immigrants’ “spoiled” identity (Goffman, 1963), but also as a “bureaucratic gift” (Kravel-Tovi, 2017) that could facilitate their fuller inclusion in the Jewish Israeli collective. On the whole, immigrants from the former Soviet Union were relatively unconcerned about their religious classification by the state and society (Goodman 2008). Ethiopian immigrants, in contrast, tended to actively oppose

conversion (Kaplan, 1988). Upholding the formal narrative of their primordial Jewishness, many mobilized integrative protests that portrayed expectations of conversion as both unjustified and stigmatizing.

In subsequent decades, members of both groups have continued to negotiate their formal and symbolic positions in Israeli society (Shavit, Sasson-Levy, & Ben-Porat, 2013; Mizrachi & Zawdu, 2012). Their divergent relationships to established notions of Jewish belonging and nativeness have found expression in formal national contexts, including the celebration of new holidays reflecting different notions of belonging. Two such examples, the Ethiopian Sigd and the Russian Victory Day, are celebrated as annual reaffirmations of each group's position in Israel, and both holidays are now integrated into the Israeli national calendar. The Sigd recalls the formative event at Mount Sinai and symbolizes a renewal of the covenant between God and the Israelites (Abbink, 1983). Victory Day commemorates the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II. In each case, ceremonies were initiated by in-group political actors and later granted recognition by state actors. While one is religious and the other civil, both holidays are framed in relation to local conceptions of nativeness, and both correspond to primary sources of legitimacy for their community's presence within the established nation-state: the biblical promise of ancient Israel to the Jewish people and the aftermath of World War II, respectively (Aharon-Gutman, 2013; Trevisan Semi, 2005).

The resulting boundary shifts involved dynamic processes of meaning making (Wimmer, 2013) not only during processes of incorporation, but also in relation to core national principles. For example, annual rituals that reaffirm and maintain ethnonational ties like the Sigd have supported core claims of Jewish commitment and nationhood, including claims of a primordial covenant between modern-day Jews and the people and land of ancient Israel.

In effect, the incorporation of nonrabbinical and non-Orthodox Jews in this period reveals both the strength and the malleability of Jewishness as a defining feature of membership in the Jewish Israeli collective and nation-state. In this period, notions of Jewishness became diversified in ways that found expression both within and beyond normative frameworks, including some that became detached from Orthodox rabbinical channels. These transformations show how expanded conceptions of Jewishness can be mobilized as a flexible resource for redefining the boundaries of the social and political collective and encompassing people who did not meet the hegemonic criteria for inclusion established in earlier historical periods.

ISRAEL'S "OTHER" OTHERS: MIGRANT WORKERS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Between the mid-1990s and the mid-2010s Israel became home to new groups of global migrants—migrant workers and asylum seekers—who differed markedly from the groups previously described. Like their counterparts in other world regions, migrant

workers came primarily in search of economic opportunity, whereas asylum seekers fled political repression or violent conflict and sought refuge and protection. The state, however, viewed both groups through a Zionist frame, with the Israeli-Palestinian fault line playing a key role. The terms used to describe them in state discourse and government reports—"foreign workers" (migrant workers) and "infiltrators" (asylum seekers)—reflect this ideological framing. Portrayed as threats to the state's security, economy, and demographic "balance," both groups have been distinguished categorically from immigrants authorized to claim Jewish nativeness.

Despite substantial differences, these groups have much in common from the Israeli government's standpoint. They are not Jewish, nor can they claim any "bureaucratically legible tie" to the Jewish collective. Neither do they fit the conventional definition of immigrants, either in their own terms or those of the state. Instead, and unlike Jewish immigrants who chose Israel as a permanent home, most intend to stay temporarily. Neither ratified citizens nor "real" Others (i.e., Palestinian), global migrants constitute a new kind of "other" Other in Israel (Willen, 2010a, 2019; see also Kritzman-Amir, 2009).

Migrant workers began arriving in the mid-1990s, about half on an authorized ("legal") and the rest an unauthorized ("illegal") basis, following the exclusion of Palestinian workers from the Israeli labor market in the wake of the second Palestinian intifada (uprising). When military closures prevented Palestinian workers, who had become indispensable to the Israeli economy since 1967, from reaching their jobs, industry leaders in agriculture and construction pressured the state to allow their replacement with overseas workers. For employers and policymakers, the advantage of migrant workers over Palestinians was their presumed neutrality in the simmering Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Once this arrangement was approved, the number of authorized workers recruited abroad skyrocketed, and Palestinian participation in the Israeli labor market plummeted. Meanwhile, given the rising need for elder care providers, permits were issued to hire live-in caregivers as well, mostly from the Philippines.

Although the importation of overseas labor was viewed as a temporary solution to a temporary problem and not a permanent solution to labor market need, authorized migrant workers who arrive have often stayed even after the expiration or loss of their visas. Many lose status through no fault of their own, but rather as a result of systematic state- and industry-level policies and practices that render them "illegal workers generated by the system" (Kemp & Raijman, 2003, p. 7). An evolving array of formal and informal practices has established their "foreignness" and sought to prevent their permanent settlement, including the "binding arrangement" that limits workers' rights, as well as a lack of worker protections, informal (and illegal) practices of passport confiscation, and prohibitions on retaining one's legal status after become pregnant or having a baby (Kemp, 2004; Kemp & Kfir, 2016).

Also in the 1990s, Israel began attracting unauthorized migrant workers, mainly from South America, west and southern Africa, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and South Asia. Most arrived through the "tourist loophole" (Willen, 2003) in Israel's otherwise rigid border regime: they came as tourists or Christian pilgrims intending to

overstay their visas. In the late 1990s and early 2000s work opportunities were plentiful, mostly as cleaners of homes and offices, and thriving migrant communities sprang up in the Tel Aviv area (Kemp & Rajjman, 2008; Kalir, 2010; Liebelt, 2011).

For unauthorized migrants, a critical moment came in 2002 when the government launched a mass deportation campaign (*gerush*) (Willen, 2010a, 2019). Within a few short months, global migrants were recast in official state discourse as job stealers, tax evaders, and deportable, unwanted criminals, and a “demographic threat” to the state’s Jewish political majority. The newly established Immigration Authority employed techniques of racial profiling and violence, at times catching others—authorized migrants, tourists, and even the occasional Israeli citizen—in their dragnet. The state’s treatment of Palestinians became a template of Otherness that influenced its treatment of this new population of “other” Others (Willen, 2010a, 2019). The *gerush* thus served as a turning point that confirmed and concretized global migrants’ Otherness in ways that intensified in subsequent years—with profound implications for the second group of global migrants: asylum seekers who began arriving from Eritrea and Sudan soon after, in the mid-2000s.

These Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers were viewed through the lens of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the moment they arrived (Duman, 2015; Kritzman-Amir, 2015). Because they entered Israel via the desert border with Egypt and not an official port of entry, many were detained under the 1954 Prevention of Infiltration Law legislated sixty years earlier to apprehend Palestinian fedayeen (guerrillas). By justifying asylum seekers’ arrest and detention on these grounds, the state did not just resurrect the term “infiltrators,” but also reinvigorated it to frame Eritreans and Sudanese as both a demographic and a security threat.

The government employed this discursive frame in shirking its obligation to review asylum seekers’ petitions for protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention and adopting a range of exclusionary strategies instead. These included tactics of “hot return” at the border, the construction of a security fence like the one in the West Bank, lengthy periods of administrative detention; and economic sanctions. In bureaucratic terms, the state continually avoided acknowledging the asylum seekers as refugees—or even reviewing their petitions for protection (Kritzman-Amir, 2015). Whereas 70 percent of Sudanese and 80 to 90 percent of Eritreans who apply for protection in other countries are granted refugee status, Israel’s rate of recognition for these groups remained well below 0.1 percent in late 2017 (ASSAF & EWCC, 2017), the point at which a new deportation campaign was announced, this time targeting asylum seekers. Unlike the mid-2000s, when migrant workers were expelled to their own countries of origin, the new policy violated the international legal principle of non-*refoulement*, which prohibits the deportation of asylum seekers to a place of ongoing danger. These deportation efforts hinged on a widely reported, but purportedly secret, agreement between the governments of Israel and Rwanda, a country castigated by Israeli and international human rights groups for failing to protect asylum seekers sent there by the Israeli government under what were described as “voluntary departure” arrangements (Shoham, Bolzman, & Birger, 2018).

Notably, grassroots xenophobia against global migrants was rare in Israel until the mid-2010s. At that point, a handful of right-wing politicians began using inflammatory language to justify exclusionary measures, undermine asylum seekers' claims to protection, and sow fear that a flood of asylum seekers might overrun the country (Kalir, 2014; Duman, 2015). Such assertions found particular support in South Tel Aviv, a predominantly low-income, predominantly Mizrahi area in which first migrant workers and later asylum seekers took up residence.

Overall, attitudes and policies toward global migrants hinged on their categorical exclusion from any possible claims of Jewish nativeness, but three exceptions merit brief mention. First, in response to lengthy activist struggles, small groups of children born in Israel to unauthorized migrant parents were granted residency status in Israel in the mid-2010s. The activists framed their struggle by innovating on core Zionist claims, including the claim that these children, who spoke Hebrew, studied in Israeli schools, and in some cases expressed interest in serving in the military, were "Israeli in every way" and "had no other country." Second, a coalition of activists spanning the political spectrum spoke out in 2007 in defense of a small group of asylum seekers—Sudanese fleeing Darfur—insisting that a "kinship of genocide" bound the Jewish state to grant them protection (Willen, 2010b). Finally, a broader swath of Israeli society spoke out in early 2018 to protest the announcement that Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers would be deported to Rwanda. In open letters and petitions, a wide variety of groups and organizations insisted that asylum seekers may not be Jewish or native to Israel, but they do deserve protection from the state that was founded as a haven for Jews seeking protection.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored how notions of Jewish nativeness have undergone continuous construction and reconstruction in relation to changing demographic conditions throughout the history of the state of Israel. This constructivist approach shifts attention away from positivist debates about who is and who is not "native" toward a more nuanced discussion of how conceptions of nativeness are themselves created, acquired, transformed, and sustained in response to diverse political challenges and goals (Calhoun, 2001). A constructivist approach also facilitates critical reflection on how conceptions of Jewish belonging in Israel have been essentialized and taken for granted by political actors and groups even as they have changed and transformed in response to demographic shifts and pragmatic challenges.

In the four historical periods under consideration, we have considered how claims of Jewish nativeness were grounded in constructions of a natural connection between Jews and their collective imagined birthplace and how these constructions were manifested, in institutional contexts and through cultural performance, for diverse ethnonational categories of immigrants who have been imagined as kinfolk (Anderson, 1991). We have also explored how these processes have unfolded in relation to Palestinian indigeneity

as a romanticized cultural form and as a competing political claim to local nativeness that multiple generations of Israeli actors have sought to repress through various forms of political and ideological labor. Finally, we have shown how cultural, political, and ideological frameworks for managing Palestinian otherness have been mobilized to frame and manage the arrival of non-Jewish, non-Palestinian newcomers to Israel.

The durability of the notion of Jewish nativeness in Israel is anchored neither in a fixed group identity nor in the early formative years of Israeli nation-building. Instead, it is tied to a range of changing cultural and institutional practices and mechanisms (Wimmer, 2013). By exploring the ongoing constructivist work behind this durability, it becomes possible to situate the Israeli case in broader scholarly conversations about the practices and processes through which grounds for groupness and boundary work can adapt and persist across significant periods of social and political change.

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NOTES

1. In some instances, Palestinians were able to follow a strict procedure allowing them to apply for a form of temporary resident status that might turn into citizenship after several years.
2. This change followed the Supreme Court's 1969 decision in the Shalit case (HCJ 58/68), in which the court, in a 5–4 majority, accepted a petition to register as Jews two children of a Jewish father and a Christian mother. The decision led to a political compromise in the form of the amendment to the Law of Return.
3. The examination of Ethiopians who migrated under the Entry Law (and the not Law of Return) is beyond the scope of the present discussion, but see Seeman (2009).

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CHAPTER 11

THE JEWISH ETHNIC DIVIDE AND ETHNIC POLITICS IN ISRAEL

SAMMY SMOOHA

ANY analysis of relations between politics and ethnicity in democracies should focus on several key questions. First, it should be ascertained whether the political system seeks to eliminate or retain ethnic differences (Smootha, 2002). Liberal democracies aim to phase out ethnicity by privatizing it and setting up mechanisms for free mixing and assimilation (e.g., civil marriage and nondiscrimination policies), while consociational democracies institutionalize group membership by recognizing constituent groups and granting them collective rights. Second, it is important to know who governs—namely, if the governing elite is representative of the various ethnic groups in society. Third, it is important to determine if ethnic political parties are present or absent, if nonethnic parties truly represent the main ethnic groups, and if the parties significantly differ in their ethnic and class base. Fourth, it is of major interest to find out whether members of the various ethnic groups differ in political attitudes toward human rights, foreign and security affairs, and other issues. Fifth and finally, it is essential to assess the implications of the ethnic divide for politics (whether it makes politics divisive, violent, or unstable) and the state (whether it makes the state ethnic and discriminatory toward non-dominant groups) (Lynch, 2016; Petersen, 2002).

All these issues are discussed here in light of the ethnic divide among Jews in Israel. The first part examines the differences between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim and the trajectory of their relations. The second part explores how Israeli politics is ethnically based and divided. The chapter concludes with discussing two rival theses for explaining the support of the political Right by the non-dominant ethnic groups and an assessment of the wider implications of the ethnic divide and ethnic politics. The central thesis is that

the ethnic divide in Israel is serious, as are its repercussions for politics and the character of society and state. It does not, however, lead to instability and violence, and its destabilization potential is much smaller than that of the deep divide between the religious and secular Jews and the deep divide between Arab and Jewish citizens within the “Green Line.”

There were 8.3 million citizens in Israel inside its pre-1967 borders at the end of 2016. The population is 82 percent Jews and 18 percent Arabs. These figures refer to Israel’s citizens who have a right to vote for the Knesset. They differ from the official population statistics published by the Central Bureau of Statistics. In computing these figures, we include in the Jewish population the Jewish settlers across the Green Line and the non-Jews who are family members of Jews, but exclude from the Arab population the Palestinian Arabs of East Jerusalem and the Druze of the Golan Heights who are permanent residents but not citizens (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

About three-quarters of the Jews are Israeli born, divided into Ashkenazim (originating from Europe and America) and Mizrahim (from the Middle East and North Africa), with a preponderance of the latter. Between 10 and 17 percent of adult Jews identify themselves as ethnically mixed when asked in public opinion polls about their ethnic origin (15 percent in 2017) (Smootha, 2018). Russian immigrants (including their non-Jewish kin) who arrived in the 1990s and their descendants constitute 20 percent of the Jews. Ethiopian immigrants and their descendants number 2 percent of the Jews. Each of these Jewish population groups, with the exception of the Ethiopians, is numerically significant for the base of political parties and blocs.

ETHNIC DIVIDE

The State of Israel is the product of Zionism and the presence of members of the Yishuv (the new Jewish community during the pre-state period), who were Ashkenazi. As a national liberation movement of Jews, Zionism emerged along with other European national movements. It aimed to resolve “the Jewish Question” in Europe, liberating Jews from anti-Semitism, assimilation, and minority status and fulfilling their national right of self-determination. It virtually ignored non-European Jews, who by the 1940s had not endured the severe crisis European Jews had experienced.

Of the half million Jews who immigrated to Palestine from 1881 to 1947, 88 percent were Ashkenazim, and along with the old Jewish community, Ashkenazim numbered around 80 percent of the Jews on the eve of the proclamation of the state. These demographic ratios explain the history of the Jewish settlement of Palestine. Ashkenazim were the Jews who immigrated to and settled in Palestine, created the “new Jew,” revived the new Hebrew language, established the new Hebrew culture, formed Jewish societal institutions, and founded hundreds of villages and towns. Non-European Jews lived on the margin of the new Jewish community of Palestine, while Ashkenazim were the founders and made up its mainstream.

The declaration of the State of Israel started a new era. The fledgling Jewish state needed mass immigration for national security and rapid development. It opened to free Jewish immigration. The reservoir of immigration from Europe was limited because of the decimation of six million European Jews in the Holocaust and the severe restrictions on immigration from behind the Iron Curtain. Western Jews were well established in their countries and unwilling to immigrate to Israel. On the other hand, the bloody conflict between Israel and the Arab world had destabilized the political and social position of the Jews in Arab and Muslim areas, turning them into enemy-affiliated minorities. Although Ashkenazi Jews were Israel's first choice, it reluctantly opened its doors to Mizrahi Jews because an increase in the number of Jews in the new Jewish state was vital for its defense, growth, consolidation, and strengthening (Meir-Glitzstein, 2014).

From 1948 to 1960, 54 percent of the immigrants came from Muslim countries and 46 percent from Europe and America. Despite suffering the horrors of the Holocaust and under Communist regimes, Ashkenazi newcomers soon adjusted to the new Israeli society thanks to their linguistic and cultural resemblance to the dominant Ashkenazim, the prevalence of helpful relatives and friends among the well-established Jewish population, and their relatively better resources (education, small families, compensations from Germany, and favorable policies). In contrast, the immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa paid a high price. They were *de facto* refugees without the benefit of such official status. They were displaced persons who had no other place to go except Israel. Their lower standard of education, large families, cultural distance, differences in religious observance, and lack of supportive acquaintances in the absorbing population added enormously to their powerlessness and vulnerability.

The Mizrahim's powerlessness made them susceptible to manipulation and exploitation. They served as a convenient tool in the hands of the government for meeting the urgent and vital needs of the state. There was a need to settle Israel's land, of which 55 percent was allocated by the United Nations partition plan and 23 percent was occupied during the War of Independence. Israel destroyed 450 Arab villages and towns and it was internationally pressured to allow the return of hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees. Much of this land was on the periphery, and its immediate settlement by Jews was designed to withstand international demands to repatriate the Arab refugees. No less important was the need for growth and development: expansion of the military, infrastructures, housing, economy, and civil service. It was a government policy to harness the powerless Mizrahi immigrants to achieve these two grand state objectives. To do so, many Mizrahim were forcibly driven to the periphery (development and immigrant towns and *Moshavim*) (Tzfadia, 2000) and into various low-status positions, pushing Ashkenazim who had arrived before 1948 and to some extent Ashkenazi newcomers upward into the middle and higher classes as military officers, schoolteachers, bureaucrats, professionals, service providers, managers, merchants, entrepreneurs, and investors.

While Mizrahi immigrants were effectively utilized as mobile and cheap manpower (Bernstein & Swirski, 1982), they were seen at the same time as a major threat. They were suspected of downgrading the new Israeli culture, democracy, and modern way of life because of their ostensibly cultural backwardness, religiosity, and life experience under

authoritarian regimes. The graver danger, however, was their possible alignment with the small Orthodox and right-wing political parties, which could endanger Labor's hegemony. Another perceived menace, though latent, was that they might cooperate with the Arab minority because of their common cultural heritage and class inferiority. A series of steps was adopted to weather these perils, the most important of which were the rapid dismantling of the Mizrahim's Judeo-Arab culture; their Hebraization, Israelization, and Zionization through the public schools, the mass media, and the military; co-optation of their leaders and elite; and their distribution among the ruling political parties. This package of measures was labeled and marketed as a "melting pot" policy.

The various Mizrahi weaknesses and repressive government policies institutionalized an ethnic societal structure whose foundations were laid during the pre-state period, in which Ashkenazim (both Israel born and newcomers) were positioned on the top, Arab citizens were at the bottom, and Mizrahim were sandwiched in the middle. Ashkenazim kept their power and privilege. The Hebrew culture, procedural democracy, and Labor's hegemony were preserved despite the high influx of Jewish immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa and the incorporation of an ultra-Orthodox and Arab minorities in the new state. The Mizrahim's resentment of Labor, their upward social mobility, and their shift to the right were at the same time seeds sewn for a sea change in due course (U. Cohen & Leon, 2011; Kimmerling, 2001; Shafir & Peled, 2002).

The gradual change came to fruition after three decades of statehood. It was dramatically expressed in the Mizrahi contribution to the change of government in 1977. This was part of a more comprehensive change in Israeli society and politics. Israel's demographic and economic growth was phenomenal. It experienced democratization, moving from a quasi-democracy in the 1950s to a more open democracy. Non-dominant groups (Revisionists, Mizrahim, the ultra-Orthodox, the National Religious, Arabs) were empowered and moved toward the center. Protest movements and civil society rose and gathered strength and influence. Occupation of large territories in 1967 made occupation and peacemaking the most central issue in Israeli politics.

Given this trajectory of Mizrahi–Ashkenazi relations, the critical question is to what extent the ethnic divide matters in Israel after seventy years. The answer regarding ethnic inequality depends greatly on the precision of the measures used. During the first two decades of statehood, ethnic inequality was so extreme that crude measures were both relevant and sufficient. These included knowledge of Hebrew, literacy, and ownership of durable goods such as refrigerators and washing machines. But they were no longer relevant in Israel's sixth and seventh decades, when the more pertinent measures became full command of Hebrew, university degrees in highly competitive subjects (e.g., computer science and brain studies), and the market price of one's residence. It is possible to generalize that the more precise and demanding the measures, the greater are the ethnic discrepancies in the 2010s. It is, however, very difficult to secure relevant and exact data because most Jews (barring Russian-speaking immigrants and Ethiopians) are second- and later-generation Israelis whose ethnicity is not known, and Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics does not gather data on ethnic descent.

Let us examine socioeconomic inequalities. When viewed using crude measures, the gaps are small, though still significant. For instance, the monthly gross salary/wage of an average Israeli-born Mizrahi in 2018 was 14,153 NIS, only 16.5 percent less than that of an Ashkenazi counterpart (16,483 NIS). The similarity between them is striking when compared to the 7,913 NIS earned by a Jew from Asia/Africa who immigrated since 1990, mostly an Ethiopian Jew, and 8,190 NIS by an Arab (Swirski, Konor-Attias, & Liberman, 2020). Yet precise measures would probably show that competitive and high-income branches of the economy (professions, management, high technology, start-ups, exits from start-ups) are mostly staffed by Ashkenazim.

Some studies have been done on persons having a chance to obtain a university degree, which is the most critical and valid measure in a postindustrial society such as Israel. According to one study of twenty-five- to forty-four-year-old Jews in 2011, the percentages of persons with a university degree were 29 percent among Mizrahim (born in Asia or Africa or Israeli born whose parents were born in Asia or Africa), 47 percent among Ashkenazim (born in Europe or America or Israeli born whose parents were born in Europe or America), and 42 percent among ethnically mixed (the parents differ in ethnic descent). The opportunities for Ashkenazim, ethnically mixed Jews, and immigrants from the former Soviet Union are much higher than for Mizrahim, even after controlling for parents' education (Dobrin, 2015). A more recent study of acquisition of a BA degree by second- and third-generation Jews who were twenty-six to forty-two years old in 2015–2017 also reveals appreciable ethnic differences (Y. Cohen, Lewin-Epstein, & Lazarus, 2019). A majority of 63.9 percent of Ashkenazim in the second generation and 56.4 percent in the third generation have a BA, as compared to 30.5 and 36.0 percent, respectively, among Mizrahim. The ethnic intergeneration gap decreased from 30 to 20 percent points but it is caused by the decrease in BA's among Ashkenazim and by the increase in BA's among Mizrahi women who mostly attended low-status colleges of education. Mizrahi men hardly improved their achievement of BA from a second to a third generation (27.4 and 28.0 percent). It is estimated that it will take four to five generations to close the educational inequality. Mizrahi disadvantage would have been even more striking if broken down by college versus university, area of study, degree (BA, MA, and PhD), and representation in the academic staff of institutions of higher education.

The Israeli stratification system is evidently skewed in favor of Ashkenazim, who are in the middle and higher socioeconomic strata, while Mizrahim are in the middle and lower strata. The middle class is predominantly mixed due to Mizrahi mobility (U. Cohen & Leon, 2008). The two ethnic communities are also separate in residence. There is a concentration of Mizrahim in the periphery of the country due to past discriminatory state policy, as well as in poor neighborhoods in the center. This overlap among ethnicity, class, and residence, in addition to evidencing ethnic discrimination, reproduces much of the intergenerational inequality.

Israeli elites are substantially Ashkenazi. This is true of the economic, media, judicial, cultural, artistic, academic, and scientific elites. Mizrahim have penetrated the military and political elites, but the leading voices there are still Ashkenazi.

Due to past cultural repression, Mizrahim have undergone substantial cultural Israelization, limiting ethnic differences to a subculture (Smootha, 2007). They share with Ashkenazim the dominant hybrid Hebrew culture with its Hebrew language, Protestant ethics, Judaism, Zionism as ethnic nationalism and ideology, and strong Western orientation. Yet there is a Mizrahi subculture prevalent among Mizrahim in the working class, among the poor, and to some extent in the middle class. It is characterized by the use of a guttural accent, religious traditionalism (practices of religion seen to be inconsistent from an Orthodox viewpoint), folk religion (cults of sages, amulets, folk medicine), extroversion, warmth, Mizrahi music, ethnic foods, low-cost entertainment, sensitivity to honor, right-wing views, and hatred of Arabs. Within Mizrahi subculture dwells a bitter collective memory, according to which Mizrahim suffered from repression and humiliation at the hands of the Labor authorities in the 1950s, including a feeling of hostility and a need to get revenge for it. This predominantly proletarian subculture is labeled underdeveloped and inapt, and Mizrahim who have established themselves in the middle and upper classes shy away from it.

According to the national ethos, widespread mixed marriages will eventually blur the ethnic divide. Indeed, mixed marriages have been ongoing, reaching a third of Jewish marriages and acceptability in the 1980s (Goldscheider, 2015, pp. 203–208). Yet they have not eliminated ethnicity among Israeli Jews. They are mostly restricted to the middle class, in which both ethnic groups are well represented. Mixed offspring are only 12 to 17 percent of adult Jews due to mass immigration from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia. Marriages between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim are much fewer than those among Mizrahim from different countries of origin and marriages among Ashkenazim themselves. Intensive intragroup marriage homogenizes each ethnic group socioeconomically and culturally.

Despite the class and subcultural disparities between the ethnic groups, Mizrahim have not developed separate identity and large-scale protest movements. They prefer Jewish and Israeli identities to ethnic identity. While some Mizrahi protest movements have emerged, such as the Wadi Salib unrest, the Black Panthers, the Ohalim movement, Hakeshet Hademocratic Hamizrahit, and *Ars Poetica*, they have failed to mobilize the Mizrahi masses and to form an alternative ideology to the melting pot (for the record of the Mizrahi protest, see Chetrit, 2009; for a critique of the “Arab Jew” protest identity, see Tal, 2017).

Other manifestations of the ethnic divide include ethnic politics (a topic to which I will return), a ratio of convictions for crime of two Mizrahi to one Ashkenazi, and racism. Racism against Mizrahim is cultural rather than biological or descent based. Many Mizrahim can be identified by appearance, name, and address. They endure prejudice and discrimination based on their negatively perceived subculture, which associates them with low ability, backward mentality, intolerance, and aggression. Discrimination is evident in admission to bars, communal villages, and selective and competitive workplaces (Y. Rubinstein & Brenner, 2014), as well as the limited mention of Mizrahi heritage and creative works in textbooks of history and literature (Bitton, 2011).

One of the major debates in Israeli social sciences is over the severity and trajectory of the ethnic divide (Smootha, 1986). Lissak (2009) laments the failure of the melting pot for Mizrahim of the 1950s, while Ya'ar (2005) views the melting pot as a success and ethnicity as steadily fading. Swirski (1989) presents Mizrahim and Ashkenazim as hierarchical and opposed ethno-classes ("ethnic division of labor"). I (Smootha, 2008) regard the Mizrahi mass immigration of the 1950s as a failure, especially when compared to the success of the Russian mass immigration of the 1990s. Postcolonialists (Hever, Shenhav, & Mutzafi-Haller, 2002; Shenhav, 2006) see the ethnic divide as serious but dwell on the production of knowledge about it and the image of Mizrahim as "the other" rather than on its real cultural and class aspects.

Seventy years after statehood, Mizrahim are no longer socially and politically vulnerable. They hold a deterrence power to prevent harm being done to them and clout to press for correction of past and present injustices perpetrated against them. For example, anti-Mizrahi public pronouncements face censure and retaliation; the minister of education appointed a special public inquiry commission and accepted its proposals to enhance the share of Mizrahi heritage in the curriculum; and the minister of culture and sports redirected budgets in favor of the periphery. Israel is partially open culturally to and more respectful of the Mizrahi subculture.

Like many social issues, the ethnic divide is complex. Assimilation continues. Ashkenazim have lost their hegemony but kept their dominance. Mizrahim enjoy social mobility but remain markedly lower on the socioeconomic scale. Ethnic differences are highly significant but not so deep as the religious-secular and Arab-Jewish divisions that make Israel a deeply divided society. In the national ethnic hierarchy, Mizrahim occupy an intermediate position between Ashkenazim and Arabs. For years the ethnic split has been securely and routinely reproduced and preserved by class and residential separation. The Mizrahi-Ashkenazi divide is both symbolic and real. It affects not only what foods to eat, what music to like, how to celebrate holidays, in which synagogue to pray, and which political party to vote for ("symbolic ethnicity"), but also what education and employment to obtain, where to live, and whom to marry ("real ethnicity") (Smootha, 2004).

The ethnic divide is not recognized as a central question of Israeli society. Raising the ethnic question and attempting to put it on the national agenda are castigated as inciting hate and disunity.¹ The ethnic problem is indirectly addressed by piecemeal steps to reduce inequality among socioeconomic strata and between the periphery and center. The official and media denial of the ethnic problem is also found in the views of the president of Israel. He argues that Israeli society is divided into four "tribes": ultra-Orthodox Jews, National Religious Jews, secular Jews, and Arabs. This divide constitutes a real danger to Israeli society because these tribes do not share common values and identity and lack solidarity and cohesion. There is no mention of the ethnic divide in the president's analysis (President of the State of Israel, 2015). A. Rubinstein (2017) accepts this division of Israeli society into four segments and speaks of multiculturalism and liberalism as unifying forces, but at the same time he also conveys the mainstream message that ethnic differences are not problematic.

ETHNIC POLITICS

The assimilationist strategy of liberal democracies best depicts the way Israel manages the ethnic differences between its Jews. Zionism, Israel's de facto ideology, views Jewish ethnic diversity as a negative exilic heritage, to be replaced by a revived Hebrew language, a new Hebrew culture, and a new Jew. The state neither recognizes Mizrahim and Ashkenazim as distinct and durable ethnic groups nor provides them with separate school systems, as it does for Orthodox Jews, ultra-Orthodox Jews, and Arabs. Assimilation and educational integration of the two communities are state policy, and mixed marriages are normative. The assimilationist drive is nevertheless constrained to some extent by counterforces. The state accepts ethnic separation in religious tradition, as reflected in the official duality of national and local rabbinate and in ethnically based synagogues. By the 1980s the state had become more open to ethnic cultural diversity because of the advanced Israelization of Mizrahim and the more inclusive policy of the ruling political Right.

Ashkenazim founded the State of Israel and ruled it for decades. The governing elite during Labor rule was almost entirely Ashkenazi. Token Mizrahi appointments were made in the Knesset, the government, the Supreme Court, the Histadrut, the Jewish Agency, and political parties. Mizrahim entered power positions in local governments and workers' councils in the 1960s and gradually moved to national posts in the 1970s, especially after the accession to power of the Right in 1977. Politics has served as an important channel of mobility for Mizrahim. Their mobility was facilitated by the shift of younger Ashkenazim from politics to the high-technological economy, law, mass media, science, and academia. By the mid-2010s Mizrahim had assumed the positions of state president, top cabinet ministries (defense, foreign relations, treasury, education), chief of staff, chief of police, head of Mossad, directors-general of government offices, head of the Labor Party, and more. Yet while Ashkenazim have lost political hegemony, they have kept their political dominance. The fact that Israel's national governing elite is both ethnically representative but led by Ashkenazim is well reflected in the ethnic composition of Israel's 35th government (appointed in May 2020): sixteen out of the thirty-five cabinet ministers are Mizrahim, but real power is still at the hands of Ashkenazim.

Party politics is the most pertinent arena for the ethnic divide because of its centrality in Israeli politics. Israel's multiparty system encourages ethnic politics. Ethnic parties are legal but not legitimate because they are incompatible with the Zionist vision of "amalgamation of exiles." Several features of the political system countenance the formation of ethnic political parties: the automatic enfranchisement of Jewish immigrants upon their arrival and settlement in Israel; the electoral method, which is totally based on proportional representation with a relatively low threshold (1 to 3.25 percent over the years); the state financing of political campaigns and parties; and most important, the coalition structure of all Israeli governments, which accords power and privilege even to small political parties that join government coalitions.

It is therefore no wonder that Israeli party politics is pervaded by ethnicity. Immigrant groups form political parties to run in elections and to win Knesset seats. In the first years of the state, parties of Sephardic and Yemenite Jews were seated in the Knesset, but they lost representation thereafter because the new immigrants from Muslim countries in the 1950s were strongly pressured to vote for the ruling parties that controlled employment, health services, housing, and other resources in the new state. The Black Panthers movement failed when it ran for the Knesset as a party in 1973, but one faction of it joined the Communist Party in 1977 and another combined with the leftist Shelly Party, each achieving one Knesset seat but afterward disappearing. In 1981 Tami, a splinter party from the Mafdal (National Religious Party), won three seats, but it was defeated in the next Knesset election. It was replaced in 1984 by Shas, an ultra-Orthodox party led by Ovadia Yosef, a leading Mizrahi rabbi, and made up of activists who were frustrated by their maltreatment by the Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox community into which they had tried to integrate. Shas's representation fluctuated from four to seventeen mandates from 1984 to 2020 (nine in March 2020). It survived the scandal of its leaders being convicted for political corruption, the death of its founding rabbi, and an internal split. Its unparalleled and uninterrupted survival can be attributed to its fundamental legitimacy, first and foremost as an ultra-Orthodox party and only secondarily as a party that stands for Mizrahim and lower strata and validates their Israeliness and desire for ethnic integration (Leon, 2016; Peled, 1998).

The mass immigration from the former Soviet Union also created several ethnic parties. Two of those parties had a real lasting impact. Yisrael Ba'aliya was established to represent the Russian-speaking immigrants, winning two to seven Knesset mandates during its existence from 1996 to 2003, when it was absorbed into the Likud. Founded in 1999, Yisrael Betenu has won from three to fifteen seats (seven in March 2020). It has managed to survive by broadening its leadership and electoral base to non-Russian Jewish Israelis and by combining with and breaking away from nonethnic parties.

Only two ethnic parties became permanent by diluting their ethnic core. Shas has turned primarily into an ultra-Orthodox party with a Mizrahi base, and Yisrael Betenu has acted as a right-wing party, appealing to Russian and non-Russian Israeli Jews with a Far Right agenda. With minor esoteric exceptions these and the past ethnic parties have been right-wing in their platforms and leadership.

Israeli politics is not only multiparty politics but also, and more important, it has been a bi-bloc politics since 1981. The Center-Left bloc includes Labor, Yesh Atid, Hosen LeYsrael, and Meretz, while the Arab parties are on its periphery. The right-wing bloc consists of Likud, Yisrael Betenu, Yamina (composed of Hayamin Hehadash, Habayit Hayehudi-Mafdal, and Haihud Haleumi-Tekuma), Yahadut Hatorah, and Shas (for information on elections and parties, see Israel Democracy Institute, 2020).

Electoral studies in Israel, based on election polls and voting returns, uncover and unpack the ethnic base of political parties and political blocs, correspondence between outlooks of voters and political parties, and determinants of political support (Arian, 2004).² We can learn from these studies about the political attitudes and

behavior of Mizrahim, Russian speakers who immigrated to Israel in the 1990s, and old-time Ashkenazim.

Support of political parties and blocs differs appreciably between ethnic groups. Mizrahim mostly support right-wing parties, especially Likud, Shas, Yamina, and occasionally also the new centrist Hosen LeYisrael Party. Russians speakers support Yisrael Betenu, Likud, and to some extent Hosen LeYisrael and Yesh Atid. Contrary to their popular image, Ashkenazim are equally divided between all the Center-Left parties (Yesh Atid, Hosen LeYisrael, Labor, Meretz) and the right-wing parties (Likud, Yahadut Hatorah, Yamina and Yisrael Betenu). The Israeli political parties are thus ethnically based or biased. All the Center-Left parties are predominantly Ashkenazi; Yisrael Betenu and Yamina are mostly Ashkenazi; Yahadut Haturah is Ashkenazi; Shas is Mizrahi; Likud is ethnically mixed but underrepresents old-time Ashkenazim. Despite their clear ethnic base, political parties, except for Yisrael Betenu and Shas, do not have ethnic platforms and policies because they cling to the Zionist ideology, which denies ethnic Jewish diversity for the long run.

The ethnic base of political blocs is more critical to Israeli politics than the ethnic base of each party. There are many reasons for the predominance of the right-wing bloc in Israeli Jewish politics. First, the Jewish supporters of the political right have a higher population growth rate by birthrate and share of immigrants than the Jewish supporters of the Center-Left. Second, self-definition on the political right versus the Center-Left among Jews is at a ratio of 60 to 40 percent. Third, barring the Arab-based Joint List, right-wing parties in the March 2020 Knesset elections received 54.5 percent (including the unseated Otzma Yehudit) of the votes compared to 32.4 percent by the Center-Left parties (Central Election Committee, 2020). The Jewish right-wing vote is even higher if we take into consideration the occasional anti-Netanyahu vote and the no-shows in the election of some right-wing supporters. And fourth, since the Arab-based Joint List does not take part in coalition governments, the Center-Left bloc is substantially inferior in winning sufficient votes for ascending to power.

Personal attitudes and outlooks of political blocs greatly fit each other. Ethnic differences in party preference resonate with differences in political attitudes. Compared to the Center-Left bloc, the political right clearly less embraces human rights and democracy, prefers Israel's Jewish over its democratic character, suspects more the loyalty of the Arab minority in Israel, and takes a tougher stand on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Most Mizrahim (Smootha, 2007) and Russian speakers (Arian, Knafelman, & Philippov, 2009) are highly predisposed to these views and to the political right; the opposite is true of Ashkenazim. Studies show that ethnicity, age, level of education, religiosity, and self-identity are strongly associated with political views and support.

One study (Smootha, 2018b), using a logistic regression analysis of data from a representative opinion survey of the adult Jewish population, conducted in June 2017, identified the variables, each of which contributes independently and significantly to the preference of a right-wing over Center-Left government. According to this study, a person who definitely prefers a right-wing government is a man, under age 36, without a

BA degree, religious, identifies as more Jewish than Israeli, chooses the Jewish over the democratic character of the state when in contradiction, and rejects the two-state solution to the Palestinian question. Moreover, even after the contribution of these six variables is taken into consideration, being Mizrahi and a Russian speaker has still an additional weighty impact.

CONCLUSION

The ethnic divide of Jews in Israel is real and has deep impacts on Israeli politics. The two main ethnic groups are Mizrahim, who originated from Muslim countries, and Ashkenazim, who came from Christian lands. The overwhelming majority of the Jews in Israel were born or raised in Israel, but they do not have a problem identifying with one of the ethnic groups (Lewin-Epstein & Cohen, 2019). Russian-speaking Ashkenazim who immigrated to Israel in the 1990s differ from Ashkenazim who are Israeli born or have lived for several generations in Israel (Remennick, 2016).

Despite the assimilationist ideology of Zionism, the ongoing assimilation for three generations, and the gradual closure of ethnic gaps, the two ethnic communities differ markedly in social class and subculture. Ashkenazim have lost their historical hegemony as the founding group of Israeli society and state, but they still enjoy class, cultural, and political dominance. The intergenerational ethnic divide is maintained by its overlap with class and center-periphery divisions and by globalization, which widens the gaps between those in the high-technological and those in the traditional branches of the economy.

This ethnic divide has implications for politics. None of the Israeli political parties has a base consisting of a balanced ethnic mix of the Jewish population. While only two political parties are openly ethnic (Shas and Yisrael Betenu), most permanent nonethnic parties have distinctly ethnic bases. Since all parties are aligned into two blocs, it is a critical fact that the Center-Left is predominantly Ashkenazi while the Right is mainly Mizrahi, Russian, and Ethiopian. In Israel, the base of the political Right consists of the lower classes and non-dominant groups, whereas the Center-Left draws on the higher classes and the Ashkenazi group. Many wonder why the disadvantaged strata back the political Right.

Critics of the political Right indicate the various disservices it inflicts on its followers. It espouses neoliberalism and cuts welfare state services, widening socioeconomic and ethnic gaps. It upholds occupation and acts against the two-state solution to the Palestinian question. It also takes steps to weaken democracy and society by legislating in 2018 the Nation-State Law that enshrines Israel as a Jewish state without insuring equality of citizens, attacking law-enforcing agencies, and blaming opponents, human rights organizations, the “old elites,” the media, Center-Left parties, and Arab citizens of

potential disloyalty. These attacks were exacerbated when Netanyahu was investigated and indicted on fraud, breach of trust, and bribery, and three indecisive Knesset elections were held on the issue if the accused Netanyahu may serve as prime minister.

According to critics, support of disadvantaged groups for the political right is “an irrational choice,” an expression of identity politics. For them and for their right-wing parties, the universal values of democracy, equality, human rights, civic solidarity, and fairness are less important than for the supporters and parties of the Center-Left. The lower classes and Mizrahim are genuinely illiberal, intolerant, hawkish, and true believers in Jewish interests and superiority, as well as hostile to the Arabs, and hence they embrace the political Right due to their identification with its values and policies (Mizrachi, 2016; Mizrachi in Landsman, 2019), and due to their historical partial modernization (Fischer, 2016). In the same vein, Russian immigrants are also considered to be illiberal and intolerant (Al-Haj, 2019). They carry with them to Israel Soviet political intolerance, ethnic Russian domination mentality, and anti-Soviet hatred of the Left (Shumsky, 2004).

The non-dominant, the religious, the Russian speakers, the Ethiopians, and the Mizrahim support the political Right not only because they identify with its outlooks and policies but also because it accepts them unconditionally for being Jews (or related to Jews), accords them a feeling of being at home in Israel, and bestows on them some preferential treatment as Jews. It does not require them to pass tests of cultural fitness and liberalism, as the Center-Left does. They feel condescended to and somewhat rejected by the Center-Left for failing to live up to its standards. Their identification with the political right is so strong that even the severe allegations against Netanyahu do not dissuade them from their favorite political bloc. For them, the downfall of the political right is a personal failure, an insult, and a stigmatization of their identity. These intangible benefits, accorded by the political right, are more valuable and rewarding to them than universal values and material gains.

This thesis is criticized as “essentialist,” presenting Mizrahim and other non-dominant groups as irrational and ignorant of their “objective” interests, and disregarding their low status in society, the discrimination they have experienced (Mehager, 2020) and their cultural and identity needs. Rationality is subjective, however. Mizrahim make a rational choice because they choose means that in their eyes are compatible with their goals. Their support of the political Right is “a rational choice” due to three “rational” and complementary reasons. First, the Labor Party in the 1950s systematically discriminated against Mizrahi immigrants and channeled them to the lower classes (Smootha, 1978). The Center-Left has neither historically nor currently offered them a viable and attractive alternative because it shares the neoliberal ideology and policies of the political Right. Nor does it offer them a realistic alternative in terms of national security and peace with the Palestinians. Second, in contrast to the criticism, Mizrahim are actually rewarded for loyalty to the governing political Right, which distributes budgets, jobs, and other benefits to them as its constituents and as compensation for being hurt by cuts in the welfare state system (Gutwein, 2017). Critics also point to the political Right’s facilitation of Mizrahims’ social mobility by offering them cheap and better housing in the occupied territories, jobs in the national security forces, and entry of the middle

class. It also channeled many of them into the middle class. Third, the countercriticism posits that it is Mizrahims' rational choice to support political parties that best represent their interests and values. Retention of their identity and culture as Jews and their marking off from foreigners (Arabs, migrant workers, and other non-Israelis) are very important to Mizrahim. Hence they support the political Right that best satisfies these needs and interests (Elbaz, 2019). Since universalism, liberalism, secularism, and individualism threaten Mizrahims' Jewish traditions and sense of belonging to Israel and to the Jewish community, they stay away from the Center-Left parties that stand for these "non-Jewish" values. And fourth and as mentioned, the Right gives Mizrahim a sense of home and unconditional acceptance.

Contrary to widespread fears of impending disintegration of the Israeli society and state, Israel possesses sufficient resilience and solidarity. It copes well with the deep cleavages between religious and secular Jews and between Arab and Jewish citizens, generating almost no intergroup physical violence, in contrast to the massive violence with the Palestinians across the Green Line. Even more, it withstands the tensions of the more moderate ethnic divide and the deepening ideological split between the Right and the Center-Left. The common Israeliness, though it is bounded, and the resilient Israeli democracy, despite its low quality, are the chief factors accounting for the quiet and stability in Israel proper (Smootha, 2018a).

NOTES

1. Even authentic Mizrahi movements that protest against genuine deprivation and adverse policies are blamed as illegitimate and divisive. This happened with the Wadi Salib unrest in 1959, the Black Panthers demonstrations in 1971, and many other Mizrahi protest activities. Two cases that were pushed into the public view in 2018 illustrate this point. Demands by Mizrahi activists for strong government actions to tackle the "Yemenite Children Affair" (hundreds of missing immigrant Mizrahi babies and children whose families complained of kidnapping for adoption by Ashkenazi families in the early 1950s) have for many years been labeled "ethnically instigative." Also accused of ethnic provocation and sedition is the 2018 documentary *Saleh, This Is Eretz Israel*, which draws on historical records to show how Jewish immigrants from Morocco were forced by the state into new, poor, and isolated development towns in the periphery from 1956 to 1964.
2. Electoral studies are published in a series of books on elections in Israel, edited by Alan Arian and Michal Shamir. The Israel Democracy Institute regularly carries out and publishes election polls. There are also some voting studies (for example, Hofman-Dishon, 2020) that use election returns of statistical areas.

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CHAPTER 12

GENDER IN ISRAEL

REUT ITZKOVITCH-MALKA

ONE of the most significant changes Israeli society has undergone in recent decades is its growing awareness of gender inequality. Gender issues are no longer the domain of a few small groups. The feminist discourse, in all its diversity, exists among women from all segments of society: Jewish and Palestinian, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi, heterosexual and gay, religious and secular, immigrants and Sabras, and more. However, while women have made great strides in all areas of life—political, social, legal, economic, and cultural—true gender equality remains a distant vision.

Analysis of the gender situation in Israel shows similarities to other postindustrial societies, as well as characteristics unique to the gender regime in Israel. While gender inequality is not unique to Israeli society and is prevalent in most postindustrial societies, it appears that path dependency plays a significant role in shaping the gender structure of Israeli society, especially with regard to the myth and the ethos of gender equality. In addition, some of the sociocultural features of Israeli society exacerbate gender inequality by sustaining and strengthening existing gender-based stereotypes.

In this chapter I seek to trace, identify, and characterize the main features of the gender division in Israeli society and politics; address questions relevant to the status of women and the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) community; and assess the magnitude of gender inequality in various societal, cultural, and political arenas. I argue that while substantial progress has been made in improving the status of women in many arenas, there is still a long road ahead for Israel to achieve true gender equality. In order to reach this goal, a genuine change is in order: instead of a focus on the descriptive representation of women—which is no doubt important on its own—a focus on the substantive outputs of the Knesset and the government; instead of narrow, liberally oriented, gender-based legislation efforts—which are far too often inadequately implemented—a heavy focus on gender mainstreaming practices; and instead of—or more accurately, alongside—widespread feminist activity in civil society, a feminist focus on formal politics in order to inject critical feminist views into the political system and change the rules of the game.

When writing a chapter on *gender* one must address the scope of the term, as well as its relations with relevant and intertwined terms such as *sex*, *sexual orientation*, and *gender identity*. I do not address here the debates surrounding the definitions of these concepts, as those exceed the scope of this chapter; however, I want to stress the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation. Gender identity typically refers to one's feeling of being a man or a woman, or more critically a "refiguring of flesh in ways that adhere to normative gender codes...making it abide by preexisting gender laws" (Stryker, 2006, p. 247). Sexual orientation is used to describe one's patterns of sexual attraction. While the lion's share of this chapter addresses the gendered hierarchies of Israeli society and politics, thus focusing mostly on women and their experiences, a portion is devoted to the LGBTQ community in Israel. This is done in order to acknowledge the fact that sexual orientation and gender identity are two distinct constructs. While the feminist and the LGBTQ agendas and interests sometimes overlap, at other times they do not, as seen in some Latin American countries that have adopted antidiscrimination rules on the basis of sexual orientation but continue to limit access to abortion (E. Friedman, 2007).

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I discuss the status of women in Israel, using data on women's demography, health, education, employment, and so forth. Then I address the status of the LGBTQ community and its challenges to equal rights. I then focus on the political arena and analyze women's descriptive and substantive representation in the Knesset and in the government. Second, I address the unique path-dependent evolution of the gender regime in Israel and characterize the case-specific exclusion mechanisms that contribute to gender inequality in Israeli society. Finally, I draw the contours of Israeli feminism and its main objectives.

GOOD, BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH: ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN ISRAEL

As of late 2015¹ Israel's female population had reached more than 3.1 million women (ages fifteen and older). Female life expectancy continues to rise and is now 84.1 years for Jewish women and 81.1 years for Arab women. Simultaneously, the rates of maternal and infant mortality continue to drop. The average age of marriage is 25 and the average age for having a first baby is 27.6. The average fertility rate is 3.09,² the highest among all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries and well above the OECD average. Some 11 percent of Jewish mothers to children under the age of 17, and 7 percent of Arab mothers are single mothers. Illiteracy is almost nonexistent in both the Jewish and Arab female populations. In the area of education, which is an influential factor for any change in gender roles and gender inequality, 69 percent of all female high school students are entitled to a matriculation certificate, while among male high school students this number is only 56 percent. Some 58 percent of all university/

college students are female, and women now constitute a majority of students at all higher education levels: undergraduate, graduate, and PhD. The professions in which the proportion of women are highest are the paramedical professions and education (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

The number of women who participate in the workforce has grown steadily: 59.4 percent of women over the age of fifteen are employed, compared to 69 percent of men; 68 percent of employed women work in full-time jobs and 32 percent in part-time jobs. The percentage of mothers who participate in the workforce has reached 75 percent. Nevertheless, gender-based segregation and discrimination in the workforce is very evident. More than a third of employed women work in traditional feminine professions such as teaching, caregiving, office administration, social work, and nursing. In all these professions women constitute more than 70 percent of all those employed. In addition, women in executive positions constitute 34 percent of all those employed in such positions. In high tech women make up 36 percent of all employees. The average monthly wage for a women is 7,666 NIS, demonstrating a 31.7 percent gap in wages compared to men (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

In terms of empowerment, following the 2020 elections, 30 women were elected to serve as members of Knesset (MKs) (25 percent). Nevertheless, female representation in the executive remains poor; prior the 2019 elections only 4 of 21 ministers were women. In local politics women's underrepresentation is even more pronounced: only 14 of 250 heads of local or regional municipalities elected in 2018, and only 16 percent of the members of local municipalities elected the same year, are female. Outside the political world, women hold only 23 percent of senior academic faculty positions and 38 percent of senior managerial positions (Tzameret-Kertcher, Herzog, & Chazan, 2016).

The data present an interesting picture. There appears to be a gap between the status of women in basic human development indicators, such as health, education, and workforce participation on the one hand, and their status in more complex indicators of empowerment and influence on the other hand. Women are doing relatively well in the basic components of human life, most likely as a result of the general progress achieved in social-economic arenas in Israel as a whole. However, when it comes to more substantive indicators of gender equality—in which improvement requires a feminist consciousness or an egalitarian awareness—the gender gap prevails (Halperin-Kaddari, 2006). In fact, in the last decade there has been no notable improvement in gender inequality in Israel. According to the Gender Index (Tzameret-Kertcher et al., 2016), the areas in which gender inequality is most apparent are political and economic power and labor market segregation. This claim is well reflected in the previously cited data.

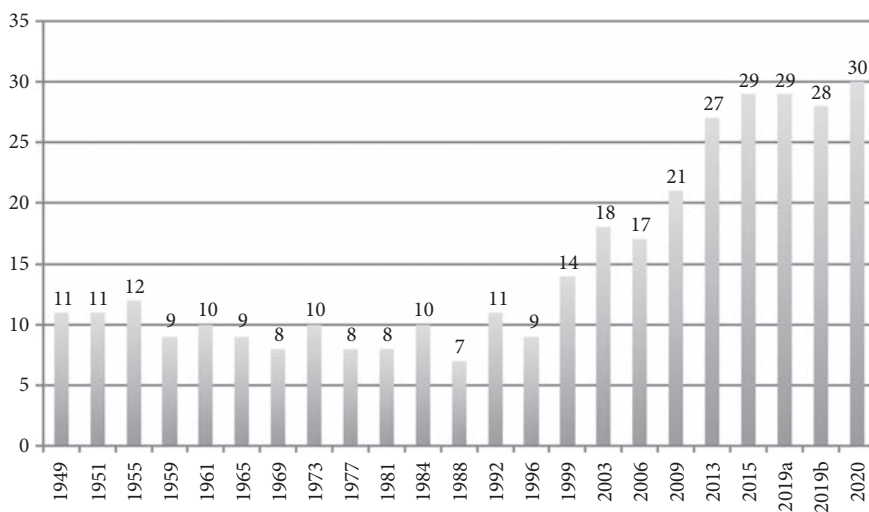
Women in Politics

Despite a marked improvement in the political representation of women—which has grown incrementally since the late 1990s—their power has not yet been consolidated or translated into effective policy gains. This section endeavors to explain this fact, based

on the intersection between descriptive and substantive representation. I choose to focus on the representation of women in formal politics because it has a unique significance that extends beyond the boundaries of the political arena. Moreover, the representation of women in political institutions not only reflects their status in society, but also shapes and models it.

Following the 2020 elections, 30 women were elected to serve in the twenty-third Knesset (25 percent). In the two rounds of elections that took place during 2019—April and September—and ended without a government being formed, 29 and 28 women, respectively, were elected to Knesset. The 2020 elections, along with both rounds of elections in 2019, demonstrate a steady female descriptive representation; however, the pattern of incremental increase in the number of female legislators elected was halted. Nevertheless, since the late 1990s there has been a substantial increase in female MKs (see Figure 12.1), with their proportion steadily growing in each term (with the exception of the 2006 elections). This increase follows a period of four decades during which there was a plateau in female representation, which ranged from a low of seven (1988) to a peak of eleven (1992).

This trend is impressive, but it is important to stress that it is not uniform across all parties in the Knesset. There are parties in the Knesset—the ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties and in the past the Islamic Arab parties³—that exclude women from the political arena altogether, claiming it is against their ideology and worldview. These parties hold a traditional worldview according to which the distinction between the public and the private spheres overlaps the gendered differentiation between men and women. Since



* On the date the Knesset was installed

2019a- April 2019 elections

2019b- September 2019 elections

FIGURE 12.1 The number of women in the Knesset (total = 120 MKs).

1996 there has been an increase in the parliamentary power of the parties that exclude women compared to prior periods, minimizing the pool of seats available for women even more than before. Nevertheless, as noted previously, this has not hampered women's representation in the Knesset. On the contrary, despite the decrease in the number of seats available for women, there has been a marked increase in their political representation. This means that due to the unique political constellation of the Israeli parliament, some parties compensate for other parties' lack of female representation.

Notwithstanding the increase in the representation of women in the Israeli legislature and its importance, a similar increase has not occurred in the executive. The number of female ministers in all Israeli governments through the present has ranged from none to a maximum of four. Moreover, in line with existing gender stereotypes, women are usually assigned to head ministries that address "soft," "caregiving" policy issues or those that primarily concern the private, rather than the public, sphere, such as social assistance, health, education, and welfare. Never has a female politician been appointed minister of defense or minister of finance, two of the most important ministerial positions in Israel.⁴

We can thus conclude that despite the growing presence of women in the Knesset in the last two decades, there is still a "glass ceiling" when it comes to ministerial positions or even committee membership (Yishai, 1997). In these roles gender segregation remains largely unchanged, showing that even when women leave the home and make inroads in fields that were once considered exclusively masculine, they are often relegated to addressing low-profile, traditionally feminine policy domains (Herzog, 1999).

While women's substantive representation is an understudied research agenda in Israeli academia, the few studies that do address it show that female MKs suggest more gender-related bills than do male MKs (Herman & Golan, 2004) and that female MKs contribute much more to the volume of legislation on issues related to women and their status in society, as well as children and family, than do male MKs (Itzkovitch-Malka & Friedberg, 2016).

Nevertheless, most female MKs do not have a feminist agenda and do not have a history of gender activism. When they do engage with issues of gender, their legislative initiatives usually address traditional, mainstream issues of women's status. This means that critical feminist views are rarely heard or implemented. As noted by Herzog (2004, p. 216), "women who were elected [to Knesset] were women in politics, but women who did not necessarily implement women's politics." Yes, female MKs support and promote legislation and policy affecting women and their status in society, but not necessarily as a result of a comprehensive feminist worldview or ideology that rejects the existing gender structure.

The tendency to avoid feminist ideology is self-defeating, because when such a worldview is at play female legislators can realize considerable achievements. This was the case regarding the introduction of gender-based legislation in the 1990s, which was led by a group of feminist MKs. These MKs steered a comprehensive effort aimed at addressing women's grievances and well-being and promoting their status in both the private

and public spheres. The products of this collective effort include the Law of Equal Opportunities in Employment (1988); the Law of Prevention of Domestic Violence (1991); the Law of Single Parent Families (1992); and the 1993 amendment to the Government Companies Law (1975) and 1995 amendment to the State Service Law (Appointments) (1959), which legitimize the use of affirmative action to promote fair representation of women on the boards of directors of government-owned companies and in public service (Halperin-Kaddari, 2006). To those one might add three important pieces of legislation of the late 1990s: The Law Establishing the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women in the Prime Minister's Office (1998); the Prevention of Sexual Harassment Law (1998), one of the most advanced of its kind (Radai, Shalev, & Liben-Kobi, 1995); and the comprehensive amendment to the Equal Rights for Women Law (1951), passed in 2000. These three laws, call for wide social change and by doing so reject the existing gender order of Israeli society.

In the twenty-first century, gender-based legislation efforts have focused heavily on gender mainstreaming, as it is understood that Israel should move from a narrow, liberal policy outlook, focused mostly on women's rights in the traditional sense of the term, to a critical gender mainstreaming approach. Those efforts include the Local Authorities Law (Advisor on the Status of Women) (2000), which requires every municipality to appoint an adviser on women's status; the Impact on Gender in Legislation Law (2007); and two key government resolutions from 2014: no. 2331, Advancement of Gender Equality and the Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming, and no. 2084, Evaluating Gender Aspects of the State's Budget. In addition, efforts have been made to tackle those areas in which the gaps between men and women are the most enduring and persistent: workforce segregation and political power. In 2008 the Knesset passed the Encouragement of Incorporation and Advancement of Women at Work and of Adjustment of the Labor Environment to Women Law, which is meant to bring about a change in the business culture and enhance public awareness to encourage the incorporation and advancement of women in the labor force. In 2014 the Knesset adopted amendment no. 12 to the Municipal Council Law (Funding of Elections), which grants 15 percent additional funding to parties that have 33 percent women among their elected candidates. Nevertheless, despite ample private legislative initiatives for the adoption of legal gender quotas at the national level, the Knesset has yet to legislate such a reform.

Clearly the volume of gender-based legislation has grown substantially in the past three decades, and its defining characteristics have changed, from a narrow liberal view, focused on women's rights, to a more comprehensive legal account of women and their status. Also evident is a growing emphasis on state feminism and gender mainstreaming. However, some scholars point to the fact that more needs to be done to achieve meaningful representation for women, as noted by Chazan (2011, p. 44): "Meaningful representation of women requires a concerted effort to alter gender relations, something that is not being achieved on the formal political level."

LGBTQ Rights

Any comprehensive account of gender in Israel should also address the LGBTQ community and its status. Even though state institutions and the legal system have increased their recognition of same-sex couples and their rights, the LGBTQ community remains discriminated against both legally and socially. The lack of separation between religion and state and the traditional characteristics of Israeli society are the main obstacles in the path to equality. Many of the struggles for LGBTQ rights occur in the judicial arena, which has proven to be liberal and progressive. However, this stands in contrast to the discriminatory nature of much of the existing legislation in Israel (Walzer, 2000).

Same-sex couples cannot marry in Israel because of the judiciary authority of the Rabbinate—or other religious authorities—over matters related to marriage and divorce. Jewish religious law clearly does not allow for same-sex marriage, and the relationship between homosexuality and Judaism is at best thorny, as Jewish law clearly states that homosexual intercourse is a sin subject to capital punishment. The religion–state symbiosis in Israel runs so deep that until 1988—when the Knesset repealed the relevant section in the Penal Law—homosexual intercourse was also legally prohibited (Whitaker, 2006).

Civil marriages are not allowed in Israel, although—after a prolonged legal struggle—the state does recognize marriages formed outside of Israel of both heterosexual and homosexual couples. Same-sex couples are also discriminated against in a variety of familial issues such as child adoption, surrogacy, and recognition of parenthood. The state does not recognize same-sex couples as candidates for adoption and allows those who identify themselves as LGBTQ to petition for adoption only as individuals. This practically denies them any chance for adoption because they are pushed to the bottom of what is already a very long waiting list. In the last decade or so, as a result of the Supreme court's ruling, the state has been willing to allow adoption in same-sex families, but only in the case where one partner is adopting the biological children of the other. Recently, after a prolonged struggle and widespread public protest, the state has finally announced that it will allow adoption in same-sex families and will not use sexual preference as a discriminatory mechanism in the adoption process. Same-sex couples are also discriminated against with regard to surrogacy, which is permitted (and financially supported) in Israel only for married heterosexual couples. In fact, in July 2018 the Knesset enacted an amendment to the Surrogacy Law that expands eligibility for state-supported surrogacy to include single women but excludes single men and gay couples. Same-sex couples, especially gay couples, are therefore forced to travel abroad for the surrogacy process, which is both costly and complicated. The controversy over the Surrogacy Law was followed by a massive civic protest. Shortly after the law was amended, Israel's LGBTQ community declared a one-day nationwide strike in protest against the change. Thousands of members of the community went on strike, many with the backing of their employers, and a major demonstration took place in Tel Aviv. Interestingly, the protest was not limited to members of the LGBTQ community, and it

spread among many liberal groups who felt that the Israeli government had undermined the principles of justice and equality. Dozens of companies and multinational corporations operating in Israel, such as Microsoft, Facebook, and IBM, declared their support for the protest and the strike, some even announcing that they would offer financial support to employees who wish to become parents via a surrogate, regardless of sexual orientation.

The LGBTQ struggle for equality stands at the heart of the conflict between liberal and traditional values, a conflict that entangles almost every aspect of gender relations in Israel. While discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation was prohibited by law in 1992 (Harel, 1996), it appears that the government itself acts in a discriminatory manner, often allowing coalition politics to dictate antigay policies. Nevertheless, in the more liberal parts of Israeli society there appears to be a growing social acceptance of the LGBTQ community in the spirit of pluralism and tolerance. Tel Aviv is often referred to as one of the most gay-friendly cities in the world, and gay tourism has flourished in recent years.

THE PATH DEPENDENCY OF GENDER RELATIONS IN ISRAEL

Path dependence is often defined as the notion that “specific patterns of timing and sequence matter; [...] large consequences may result from relatively ‘small’ or contingent events; particular courses of action, once introduced, can be virtually impossible to reverse; and consequently, political development is often punctuated by critical moments or junctures that shape the basic contours of life” (Pierson, 2004, pp. 18–19). As in many other societies, the gender arrangements in Israeli society are path dependent. To this day they are very much affected by what is nowadays referred to as “the myth of gender equality.” This myth was, and to some extent still is, deeply rooted in Israeli society, both historically and culturally, and continues to shape gender relations in Israeli society even today. The roots of this myth go back to the first Zionist fathers, who perceived themselves as modern Europeans, educated and enlightened, and therefore committed to gender equality. Subsequently, the Zionist congresses granted women the right to vote long before it was granted in the most enlightened European countries (Kamir, 2006). During the time of the Yishuv women were integrated into Jewish military organizations, joined the British army to fight the Nazis, and took an active role in the struggle to establish a Jewish state in the land of Israel and in the state-building process.

Moreover, Jewish women successfully guaranteed their right to vote for the national institutions of the Yishuv as early as the 1920s, albeit not without a persistent struggle—one that is too often overlooked and forgotten. Not only that, but their political representation was also quite impressive for the time (Fogiel-Bijaoui, 1992). When the State of

Israel was founded, women's right to vote was already taken for granted. Throughout the 1950s Israel continued to have what was then considered a comparatively high percentage of female legislators in its parliament (Brichta, 1975). In the 1970s Israel was one of the only democracies in the world that had a female prime minister, which made Israel a leader in terms of women's political representation and helped sustain the myth of gender equality.

Women's formal equality was validated by Israel's Declaration of Independence, which clearly stated that Israel will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of their sex; by the Law of Defense Service (1949), which established compulsory conscription of women into the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF); and by the Law of Equal Rights for Women (1951), which granted women equal standing with men in a considerable number of issues and improved the status of married woman with regard to property ownership and custody of children. Thus the official commitment of the state to the principle of equality was used in the Israeli symbolic system both as a myth and as an ethos (Berkovitch, 1999).

However, from the 1970s onward researchers, mostly feminists, began exposing the true gender regime in Israeli society. They repeatedly showed that gender equality was nothing but a myth and that statements about gender equality were accompanied by a demand and expectation for women to fulfill their traditional roles as mothers and wives and with clear manifestations of discrimination, exclusion, and oppression (Kamir, 2006). First, they pointed to the fact that the Zionist project was, in essence, a project of masculinity. The social ethos indeed advocated equality; however, this equality was exerted only in the male sphere, and women were asked to sacrifice their femininity on the altar of equality (A. Friedman, 1999).

Second, the compulsory conscription of women into the IDF also served to deepen the gap between perceived and actual gender equality in Israel. While Israel is one of the few countries where women face mandatory conscription, they have been largely constrained in terms of the roles they play in the military. Women are usually placed in non-combat roles or in combat-support roles at best, while men occupy combat roles and serve in high-ranking or high-profile positions. Ironically, the very involvement of women in the military, which was supposed to symbolize their equal standing with men, has entrenched gender segregation. The military has proved to be a highly masculine institution that presents a powerful gender regime and contributes to the construction of gender inequality, due to its central role and status within Israeli culture and society (Carmit-Yefet & Almog, 2016; Sasson-Levy, 2006). This effect is still evident in Israeli society today.

Even the Law of Equal Rights (1951), which established formal equality between men and women in Israel, has been exposed as discriminatory and oppressive, in two different ways. First, while the formal language of the law speaks of universal citizenship to women and formal equality, the examination of the debates and discussions surrounding the legislation process sheds light on the interpretation given to the idea of gender equality and the proper place for women in Israeli society (Berkovitch, 1999). Such examination shows that the law granted women their citizenship not on the basis of

their universal natural rights but on the basis of their social roles as wives and mothers (Herzog, 2004). The general argument surrounding the law was that Israeli women deserve equality because they have contributed to the Zionist enterprise and have faithfully fulfilled their social obligations, especially their duty as mothers (Berkovitch, 1999). By doing so the law echoed the common social convention by which the central component of the ideal Zionist woman is that of motherhood, be it the family's mother in the private sphere or the nation's mother in the public sphere (Elboim-Dror, 2001).

This is very much evident in Israeli society today; the prevailing paradigms acknowledge women as a social category based on their roles as wives and mothers and deny them the opportunity to make political claims for women on the basis of normative principles such as equality and justice. Israel remains a family-oriented, pronatalist society (Halperin-Kaddari, 2004). Family and family values play a central normative role in the lives of individuals and the collective. Furthermore, the centrality of family and family values is not limited to the more traditional subgroups among Israeli society such as the Orthodox Jews or Muslims—though it may be more salient among these groups—and is the common normative framework for most Israelis (Fogiel-Bijaoui & Reiner-Rotlinger, 2013).

Second, the law enshrined legal discrimination against Israeli women, first and foremost with respect to marriage and divorce, by granting the religious legal bodies—whether Jewish, Muslim, or Christian—autonomy on issues of personal status (Lahav, 1974). As could be expected, the religious laws—determined and implemented by male-dominated institutions—are patriarchal and traditional in nature and have warmly adopted those perceptions regarding women's nature and role, thus replicating and sustaining the public–private sphere dichotomy. The discriminatory state of women's personal status remains one of the principal barriers to gender equality in Israel.

No account of gender in Israel—especially one focused on the path dependency of gender relations—can ignore the effect of the predominance of national security in the gender structure of Israeli society. There are multiple ways by which the overdomination of security affects gender equality. First, the acute security threats Israel has to deal with on a daily basis and the dominance of the security discourse created as a result perpetuate a constant distraction from other political concerns, such as the economy, social welfare, education, and gender equality. In this kind of social climate, in which everything is subordinated to security and its needs, it is very difficult for women to struggle for their rights and for equality.

Second, the centrality of the security discourse helps to validate the existing gender-based stereotypes and further marginalize women. This has to do with the fact that human conflict largely remains a male pursuit (Tickner, 2001), based on the common belief “that military and foreign policy are arenas of policy-making least appropriate for women” (Tickner, 1992, p. 3). This is not a new phenomenon, nor is it restricted to Israel alone; however the Israeli geopolitical context deepens and exacerbates this trend (Izraeli, 1997). The effects of the security discourse disadvantage women in many social and professional arenas, as well as in the political one. Furthermore, the influence of the security discourse spreads beyond matters of security per se. The securitization and

militarization of Israeli society—which bring to the forefront security considerations or military thinking even in matters that do not strictly have to do with security—exacerbate the gender order and empower stereotypical sexist perceptions. As a result, in a spillover effect, women are perceived as less competent to operate in the public sphere as a whole.

The myth of gender equality and the ethos of an egalitarian society were, and to some extent still are, deeply rooted in Israeli society, making them very difficult to shake off. Even today, after the lack of equality has been thoroughly studied and repeatedly demonstrated, a fairly large part of the Israeli public still adheres to the egalitarian self-image. These processes have affected the evolution of feminism in Israel and for a long time hindered the ability of a strong feminist movement to operate within Israeli society.

ISRAELI FEMINISM

The feminist movement bloomed late in Israeli politics and society. While some scholars consider the fight for suffrage during the early days of the Yishuv a symbolic first wave of feminism, the feminist agenda did not properly enter Israel's public discourse and political agenda until the late 1970s, and some would argue much later. The Yom Kippur War (1973), which served to shatter several myths in Israeli society, had its share in disproving the myth of gender equality and exposing true gender segregation (Atzmon & Izraeli, 1993; Herzog, 2004). Starting in the 1970s, Israeli feminism grew stronger and radicalized. It no longer operated within the Zionist framework, but challenged it (Kamir, 2006). This wave of feminism made progress in exposing the myth of equality and demanding essential, rather than just formal, equality. Feminist activity advocated for abortions, increasing the representation of women in politics, releasing lesbian women from heterosexual oppression, and expressing solidarity with the Palestinian women suffering under the occupation. However, this new wave of feminist action created a massive backlash, and feminist activists—who at the time were mostly of Anglo-American origins—were labeled hysterical and radical (Kamir, 2006). Israeli society was not ready for their progressive ideas, and it was not until the 1990s that these ideas were articulated in formal Knesset legislation and became widely accepted.

The end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries witnessed important developments for feminist action. The undermining of the hegemonic Zionist ideology; the emergence of subcultures and subdialogues; and the disintegration of social solidarity into separate, hostile, and often conflicting sectors made room for feminist claims to be heard and made Israeli society more likely to listen to and accept such claims (Kamir, 2006). One of the most prominent and meaningful expressions of this process is the extensive feminist peace activity that has evolved, in organizations such as Women in Black, Bat Shalom, the Coalition of Women for Peace, and Machsom Watch (Herzog, 2004). In addition, carried on the waves of the politics of identity, a highly prominent feminist development at the turn of the century has been

the emergence of sectarian feminist groups, such as those of Mizrahi feminism, Palestinian feminism, lesbian feminism, and religious feminism. This development is very much in line with feminism's organizing principles, which encourage a varied, open discourse rather than a hegemonic, power-driven single voice.

Nevertheless, the varied nature of feminist activity and the problem of intersectionality, which divides women into numerous subgroups, make it almost impossible to speak about a common identity shared by all women. This hinders women's ability to mobilize political power (Herzog, 2004). Unsurprisingly then, it is relatively rare to encounter wide cooperation among feminist organizations, and it is even rarer to witness such cooperation targeted at reforming the institutional political system and the representation of women in it (Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2011).

Indeed, most of the feminist activity of the past two or three decades has occurred in the civil society, outside the realms of institutional politics. While this activity is noteworthy and impressive, it still leaves women (largely) away from the main decision-making power hubs. Given the political status of women in Israel and the fact that in modern history it was women's political citizenship that promoted their civil and human rights, Fogiel-Bijaoui (2011) calls women's organizations' lack of interest in formal politics a mistaken strategy. She further claims that women in Israel are not organized well enough into a substantial political voice, one that needs to be considered when shaping policy.

Notwithstanding impressive developments, and despite the growing awareness of gender inequality among women in Israel, many women strongly oppose the concept of feminism and refrain from identifying themselves as feminists. While they may believe in the content of the feminist agenda, they refuse to identify with feminism as a movement (A. Friedman, 1999). This too weakens women's collective power and leverage. While many women have been working to change the division of labor in their families or to change their professional status, most of these struggles are carried out by them privately, not by the organization of a group fighting to change discriminatory policies or norms. The weakness of this "peaceful" path that many women choose to take is that it lacks the power of a group organization and a strong public voice.

CONCLUSION

Up until the late 1990s there was no Hebrew translation for the word *gender*. Repeated appeals by feminist scholars, such as Dafna Israeli in the early 1980s and Hanna Herzog in the mid-1990s, were easily dismissed by the Academy of the Hebrew Language, up to the point when Herzog announced to the academy that it will be those who engage with gender who will eventually determine the Hebrew word for it. And this in fact is what happened. The word *Migdar* (Hebrew for gender) was integrated into the language because it was commonly used by women in academia, law, and other arenas of public

work (A. Friedman, 1999). This anecdote is symbolic of the status of women in Israel and its developments.

For years women in Israel were caught in the myth and the ethos of gender equality. They refused to acknowledge that in the egalitarian and enlightened state of Israel—home of the women pioneers, the compulsory conscription of women into the military, and Golda Meir—women are discriminated against, face a “glass ceiling” all too often, and suffer from various forms of violence and oppression. Today most women acknowledge the discriminatory gender structure of Israeli society, yet many refrain from translating this knowledge into social identity and social action in the spirit of feminism. This clearly affects the scope of feminist activity in Israel.

Israeli feminism was constantly curbed by the myth of gender equality and the ethos of the egalitarian Israeli society. Nonetheless, it continued to grow and evolve, claiming a place of honor in the Israeli political and social landscape. The feminist voice, or more accurately voices, have crystallized, making them a strong social force that cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, a substantial part of feminist action occurs outside the realms of formal politics, making it easier to disregard feminist considerations when outlining policy.

This argument is supported by examining the substantive representation of women in the Knesset. While the number of women elected to the Knesset has grown steadily in the last two decades, this increase in descriptive representation has not resulted in a marked improvement in their substantive representation. Yes, gender-based legislation is evident, and so are strides made toward gender mainstreaming and gender-based evaluation of legislation and policy. However, meaningful representation of women requires accepting the fact that the gender social order is a political order, in the broadest sense of the term: an order that shapes and determines the nature of society and the place of women within it. It requires a commitment to exposing and challenging the mechanisms of exclusion as part of a process of political change, in the spirit of more critical feminist views. Those are rarely heard in the corridors of the Knesset.

While women in Israel are doing far better than they did in the past, there is still a long way to go to achieve true gender equality, particularly with regard to women's political and economic power and empowerment, workforce segregation, and the issue of women's personal status, which is subjugated to the religious authorities and their patriarchal worldview. The same goes for the LGBTQ community, which continues to suffer from grave discrimination. While the Israeli government often attempts to portray Tel Aviv as the gay capital of the world, taking pride in its liberal and tolerant atmosphere—mostly in order to attract gay tourism—members of the LGBTQ community still face various forms of discrimination, with their legal status and rights being far from equal to those of heterosexual individuals.

It is to be hoped that early egalitarian ambitions will be realized so that gender equality will not remain a myth or an ethos, but become the reality of life for women and members of the LGBTQ community in Israeli society.

NOTES

1. While it is true that the data presented are only accurate for the specific period when this chapter was written, nonetheless, they help paint a general picture of the status of women in Israel, a picture that has remained fairly stable in recent years, albeit with some fluctuations.
2. The specific averages are 3.11 children for Jewish women, 3.35 for Muslim women, 2.27 for Christian women, and 2.2 for Druze women.
3. As of the 23 Knesset each of the four parties forming the Joint (Arab) List has a female representative among their MKs.
4. Though Tzipi Livni was appointed minister of foreign affairs for the years 2006–2009, also a high-profile ministry.

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CHAPTER 13

CONCEPTUALIZING PALESTINIAN POLITICS IN ISRAEL IN THE SHADOW OF THE ARAB SPRING

AMAL JAMAL

THIS chapter examines the debates about the conceptualization and practices of resistance in Palestinian society in Israel. It does so in light of two important developments that have had major repercussions for this homeland minority, namely the social and political upheavals in the Arab Spring states on the one hand and the growing nationalist extremism in Israel, culminating in the passing of the nation-state law in July 2018 and the delegitimization of Arab citizens in the 2019–2020 elections, on the other. The choice to examine the discourse of resistance among different political streams within this community is based on the presumption that such a unique prism enables us to better understand the process of identity formation taking place in that community over the past several decades. Examining the debates taking place concerning resistance helps us understand how political subjects active in this community define themselves and others and the meaning and implications of such definitions. Furthermore, given that Palestinian citizens of Israel face an excluding national power structure, analyzing their political discourse assists in demonstrating how they utilize the opportunities inherent in their institutional environment and the tools provided by that environment to facilitate an alternative political ethos that will guarantee it full civil equality and human dignity.

Hence, it is argued that Palestinian politics in Israel is best characterized as a process of discursive rationalization that seeks to realize emancipation, namely overcoming structural inferiority through transformative strategies and civilizing communicative action. Exploring the debates concerning rationalizing practices of resistance against

the Israeli hegemonic power structure in light of recent developments in the region helps to improve our understanding of the efforts made by homeland minorities to transform the field of power in which they act.

It is also argued that the limited achievements of the Arab Spring, after a short period of soaring enthusiasm, especially in Egypt and in Syria, have had a major impact on the political motivations and considerations of the Palestinian community in Israel. The following analysis reflects on the internal dilemmas among different streams of thought within the community, despite the fact that a large part of them have joined forces in the last few years in order to overcome legal hurdles constituted by the extremist Jewish parties to limit their political power and block their influence in the Knesset.

Analyzing the political discourse of the major Palestinian political parties in Israel demonstrates that there is a clear tendency to balance between the urge to resist the existing power structure and the strategic decision to confine the struggle against it to the political and legal tools made available by that structure. This strategy does not mean submitting to the political dictates of the system. On the contrary, it provokes the system, drawing reactions that unveil its discriminatory nature, justifying resisting it in the first place. Provoking the system using its own tools is rooted in the asymmetry of power relations and the benefits of citizenship, especially when compared with the social and political realities in the Arab world.

In more theoretical terms, the following discursive analysis provides some evidence for the assertion made in the literature on the politics of contention that relative deprivation is not a sufficient condition for massive political mobilization (Gurr, 1970). Rationalizing relative deprivation, which means relativizing emotional motivations such as anger and frustration, is a very central factor in the political behavior of subaltern social groups, even when they feel deprived of basic political, social, and cultural rights (Gurr, 2015; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016; Lichbach, 1998; Scott, 1990; Tilly & Tarrow, 2006).

Methodologically, the following analysis is mostly hermeneutic phenomenological. As Lavery put it, hermeneutic phenomenology “is concerned with the life world or human experience as it is lived...illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within experience that may be taken for granted in our lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding” (2003, p. 24). This type of analysis assists in understanding the different framings of resistance, especially between force and violence on the one hand and consciousness and subjectivity on the other (Caygill, 2013).

The chosen methodological approach demonstrates that one cannot use rigid analytical tools and stable conceptual categories when seeking to provide an understanding of a fluid, evolving, and controversial political reality. In contrast, hermeneutic phenomenology highlights the multidimensional character of complex resistance processes and the shifting meaning of political subjectivity. It also demonstrates that subjectivity is constructed through sustaining an open future horizon in which a desire for equal, active participation in determining the moral and political order the political subject lives in turns out to be a central dimension of her identity.

The following discursive analysis draws on multiple sources. The first is debates from twelve round tables organized by the author in the years 2011–2017, in which political leaders representing all political parties and civil activists participated. The second is debates that have taken place on social media platforms and others that took place on Internet websites. The third source is newspapers articles, published by intellectuals and political activists representing the various political camps in Palestinian society in Israel. The analysis mainly relates to the major political camps in Palestinian society, namely the Islamic Movement, the Communist camp represented by Hadash (the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality), and the National Democratic Assembly Party (hereafter Balad). These political camps are not homogenous and have undergone major transformations in the last few years. Following the shifting loyalties of the various camps helps demonstrate that political agency cannot be perceived as preceding the political context in which it acts. Political agency is a dynamic process of identity formation under circumstances that are not always anticipated or controllable.

THE “MODEST HARVEST” OF THE ARAB SPRING AND THE PALESTINIANS IN ISRAEL

The Arab Spring has had deep and long-term implications on the Middle East and North Africa. Those most affected by the events in the Arab world and their implications are the Palestinians. The initial stages of the popular uprisings were perceived in Palestinian eyes as a continuation of the various Palestinian intifadas. At the same time, however, the new regional agenda created by changes in the Arab world has turned the Palestinian issue into a secondary one in the eyes of Arab regimes, whose main concern has become to ensure their stability (Brownlee, Masoud, & Reynolds, 2015).

Of all Palestinians, those having Israeli citizenship were greatly disappointed by developments in the Arab world. The shifts in the strategic regional scene, especially as a result of the Syrian civil war and the improving relationship between Israel and Arab Gulf states, have led many Palestinians in Israel to change their positions from strongly supporting to fiercely opposing the popular protests in various Arab states.

A significant number of Palestinian youths in Israel have actively intervened in the occurrences in the Arab world, some through social networks, and a few have crossed the border to act proactively within the framework of one of the political movements involved in the bloody conflict in Syria.¹ This behavior reflects the differences that arose in Palestinian society in Israel as a result of the Arab Spring. More specifically, these disagreements reflect existential dilemmas, ranging between two conditions. One has to do with reservations about Jewish hegemony inside Israel and Israel's growing power in the region, and the other has to do with the number of indispensable accommodations that Palestinian citizens have to make to avoid endangering the very status and the achievements that they have gained so far inside Israel.

These dilemmas reflect the different perceptions of citizenship among different segments of Palestinian society. These perceptions range from a philosophy of compliance, considering citizenship a legal framework based on loyalty to its conceptualization by the state (Mann, 1987), on the one hand, to a philosophy of rejection, according to which citizenship is perceived as an open and differential structure of opportunities for political participation, which ought to enable political agents to translate it into full partnership in shaping the political and moral order in which they live, on the other hand (Balibar, 2002; Ranciere, 2010).

Most of the political forces active among Palestinian society in Israel oppose the hegemonic discourse of citizenship of the state, especially its ethno-republican tendencies, which prefer Jewish identity elements over universal civic values (Shafir & Peled, 2002; Yadgar, 2017). They argue that such a perception hollows out Palestinian–Israeli citizenship of its substantial meaning (Jamal, 2007; Jamal & Kensicki, 2020; Peled, 1992). This perception, it is argued, limits the choices made available from within a citizenship emptied of its political meaning. An alternative conceptualization of citizenship is raised by other Palestinian political agents; it meets a transformative understanding known to us from the literature, based on a substantial meaning of civility (Balibar, 2002). The volatility between these poles of citizenship creates a double consciousness: Palestinian in its cultural and national relevance and Israeli in its legal and juridical affiliation (Du Bois, 1994; Jamal, 2009). The fact that Palestinian citizens have cultural, emotional, and historical ties with the broader Palestinian people and only legal and instrumental ties with their Israeli identity renders their double consciousness asymmetrical. This situation is what makes Israeli citizenship a field of struggle among various segments of Palestinian society in Israel.

This double consciousness and the controversies over its significance have intensified against the backdrop of the fluid reality created by the Arab Spring and have reinforced the efforts made by various political camps to acquire a political language that characterizes the elusive reality and the moral and political differences in terms that are convenient for them. The events of the Arab Spring, especially in Syria, have strengthened the tendency of political agents in Palestinian society in Israel to undermine the attempts of the Israeli state to construct categories of reality that stabilize it in a manner inconsistent with their aspirations (Zureik, Lyon, & Abu-Laban, 2010). This very tendency became a form of resistance reflected in the preservation of conceptualizations that enable avoiding committing to a reality that does not express their human and national aspirations. The efforts to preserve discursive liquidity reflect an instrumentalization of the existing structure of opportunities as rationally as possible, while bringing about its transformation with civil tools. This means that the opposition to the determination of fixed political categories by the state, especially imposing a limited liberal understanding of citizenship, constitutes one of the basic dimensions of Palestinian resistance to Jewish exclusive hegemony in Israel.

The following discursive analysis delves more deeply into the various and sometimes contradictory conceptualizations of this fluid reality.

THE MAZE OF POPULAR POLITICAL WILL

The major areas of disagreement in Palestinian society in Israel in recent years demonstrate the extent to which it is immersed in the Arab world, despite the geopolitical detachment created by the State of Israel. Various political forces in this community have been competing to patronize the communal political will and identify it with their political interests. These efforts have been dynamic, changing constantly as a result of the disappointing consequences of the Arab Spring. The initial mass awakening in the Arab world created a deep emotional enthusiasm among the Palestinian public in Israel, and the images of the masses of young men and women marching in the streets gave a rosy hue to the hopes that Arab peoples are taking power into their hands in order to change the reality of their life and topple regimes that oppressed them.² Mass protest in Tahrir Square became a great inspiration.³

Voices began to emerge that reflected three camps, which all supported the popular uprisings, but for different reasons.⁴ First, the advocates of Islamist political thought supported the revolutions because of the ability of Islamic parties and movements to come to power on the broad waves of protest. Second, proponents of civil-liberal democracy supported the popular protest due to the possibility that this would lead to the establishment of new democratic regimes. Third, the supporters of the nationalist camp, especially the Nasserites, perceived the resistance as the Arab peoples' desire to take the reins into their own hands and overthrow the regimes that in the people's perspective enslaved them, prevented them from expressing their sovereignty, and subjected their resources to the narrow interests of a corrupt elite.

The realist reasoning behind the support for the popular revolutions of each of the political camps in Palestinian society in Israel were revealed when the popular upheavals reached Syria in March 2011, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia and Egypt grew stronger. The pro-democratic political discourse that framed the upheavals and legitimized them began to change to make room for strategic considerations, which took precedence over the romanticism of the will of the people. Based on debates that took place in the public sphere, it is possible to identify two major factors that conditioned each camp's position toward the popular upheavals. The first has been the position toward the American quest for hegemony in the region and the second has to do with the ethical and moral values of the various parties competing for hegemony in the Arab countries, namely secular versus religious societal cultures.

The possibility of the fall of the Assad regime in Syria was perceived by many as a direct threat to the al-Muqawama (resistance) camp, mainly the Communists and part of the Nationalists, and as an expression of weakness of this camp in facing the American quest for regional hegemony, which works in Israel's favor. At this point a serious debate arose regarding the meaning and characteristics of the concept of "revolution," which led to the rise of the concept of conspiracy. In the eyes of most Arab political parties, what had happened in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, and even Libya was a legitimate popular

revolution, given that these regimes have been part of the American camp in the Middle East. However, the upheaval in Syria necessitated a redefinition of the concept of revolution, given that the Islamic Movement and part of Balad supported them, while Hadash and the rest of Balad supporters opposed them (Khaizran & Khalaila, 2018).⁵

The debate over Syria made clear that there is a difference between mass protest against a pro-American authoritarian regime and popular protest against an equally authoritarian regime that opposes American hegemony in the region. A large number of Hadash members and many Balad activists and supporters viewed the upheaval against Assad's regime in Syria as an expression of a Western conspiracy against the al-Muqawama camp.⁶ This discussion suddenly made it clear that the concept of the revolution does not derive its meaning, as Hannah Arendt argued, from its internal characteristics, as an expression of the free will of citizens to legitimately strive to realize their rights to determine their life conditions (Arendt, 1964). According to those characterizing themselves as part of the al-Muqawama camp, a revolution is only such when it has clear implications for the alignment of Arab regimes with the antagonistic pro-American and anti-American camps in the regional balance of power. In the discursive debates between the camps, the concept of revolution began undergoing lexical upheavals, which cut it off from the subject of the revolutionary action and related it to the political goals of this subject. The rebel has become not one who revolts against oppression and thereby defines her or his identity, but one who does so based on political intentions and positioning within the field of regional power struggle. Revolution for Hadash and part of Balad supporters is limited to opposing American hegemony in the Arab region.

The political discourse of the al-Muqawama camp made it clear that the concept of the revolution was not principally in favor of the sovereignty, responsibility, and participation of Arab peoples in determining their fate, but rather against what has been perceived as an attempt to exploit the popular upheavals in order to establish Western hegemony in the region. The revolutionary concepts of the al-Muqawama camp's supporters reflected a deep mistrust of the ability of Arab peoples to determine their fate. The political unconscious of al-Muqawama discourse reflected the support and need for an authoritarian guardianship to ensure that Arab peoples do not fall prey to those who seek to deprive them of sovereignty, as if this sovereignty could be guaranteed by virtue of an exclusive authoritarian order. This cynical and manipulative approach was reinforced by the fact that this secular camp could hide behind the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood as the ultimate alternative to the existing regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, as well as the support of the monarchical regimes of the Gulf states, primarily Saudi Arabia and Qatar, in the popular protest against Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria.⁷

In contrast, the Islamic Movement, with its dogmatic and pragmatic camps, expressed its joy at the change in Egypt and Tunisia, especially after the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood movement to power.⁸ It also explicitly supported popular protests in Syria. This support left no room for suspicion by the Communists and Liberal Nationalists in Palestinian society in Israel that the Arab revolutions were driven by pro-American

forces, including the Muslim Brotherhood movement, which did not dispute strengthening American hegemony as long as it brought them to power.

As the situation in the region worsened and the civil war in Syria deepened, Communists and Liberal Nationalists began critically pointing to the informal diplomatic relations between Israel and several of the Arab Gulf states as the best evidence of the efforts made by the pro-American coalition in the region to restabilize the pro-American regimes, such as in Egypt, and continue pressuring the anti-American ones, mainly the Syrian regime.⁹ These connections were, in their eyes, sufficient proof that their suspicions that the wishes of the peoples of some Arab countries had been “hijacked” by pro-American political forces were correct. These suspicions continued to characterize the positions of the Communist and Liberal Nationalists camps even after the changes in US policy in the region following the rise of Donald Trump to the presidency in the November 2016 elections and after the Saudi crisis with Qatar, which signaled the first dissatisfaction with the unreserved support of Qatar and Turkey by the Muslim Brotherhood.

A central argument of the Communists’ and Liberal Nationalists’ critique of the developments in Egypt, Tunisia, and mainly Syria is that the rise of religious forces to power means transporting sovereignty from the people to a single spiritual leader, al-Murshid. This means that revolutionary energies are appropriated in order to institutionalize a moral and political regime that stands in direct opposition to revolutionary freedom and real popular sovereignty. In their opinion, democratization has suddenly become identified with Islamization as its exclusive meaning. This stands in stark contrast to their perception of the revolutions as an expression of civil democratic sovereignty that would change the state’s priorities and strengthen the resistance camp, identified with forces countering American hegemony in the region.

The rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the rise of a new military authoritarian regime led by Abdel Fattah el-Sisi reshuffled the political agenda. Those who supported the concept of revolution as a legitimate source of regime change expressed reservations about it after the second wave of Egyptian protests on June 30, 2013, and began to interpret it in a new way.¹⁰ The meaning of revolution in the eyes of supporters of the Islamic Movement has ceased to be the overthrow of a political regime by popular struggle and has become the exclusive ability to bring to power political forces that identify with their goals. The Islamic Movement, which supported the popular protests when they brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power, described the protests at the end of June 2013 as illegitimate counterrevolution.¹¹ This position meant that counterrevolution is not a revolution and ignored the fact that millions of Egyptians marched in the streets to protest against the regime of Mohamed Morsi, who persistently acted to establish a religious government in a society characterized by both social and ideological pluralism.

It is worth noting that the democratic option, in which the majority is dominant, especially when it is a religious one, has become problematic in the eyes of many Communists and Liberal Nationalists. This has been the case since the Muslim Brotherhood utilized the common discourse of national sovereignty accepted in the

West for its own purposes. The will of the people suddenly became another holy value in the eyes of the religious camp, whose worldview is traditionally anchored in the will of God.¹²

Communists and Liberal Nationalists criticized this opportunistic position of the Islamic Movement, arguing that it was a tactical move rather than a genuine transformation among the supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹³ The former argued that the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters in the Palestinian society in Israel remained loyal to the will of the people as long it served their interests, but when they capture the main positions of political power, they will sacrifice democracy in the name of God.

The followers of the secular camp—Communists and Liberal Nationalists—wondered how the people's will could betray itself and bring to power a movement that will destroy the possibility of its own sovereignty. They also wondered how the Western moral position in favor of democracy and the sovereignty of the people settles by supporting a Salafist religious movement, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. In their eyes, Western political opportunism revealed the dual identity of Western democracy, which serves its citizens and cares for their welfare, but at the same time contains a colonialist and chauvinistic conception of the Arab East.

The shifting sand in the Arab world led many to believe that the call “the people want” is a dangerous cliché and is a manipulative tool of those who seek to destabilize the Arab regions.¹⁴ The celebrated concept “the people want” suddenly became in the eyes of many a masking strategy, utilized by the hegemonic West, especially the United States, to reorder the region according to interests that are antagonistic to the genuine will of the people.¹⁵ This change brought many to pose questions regarding the shift of Islamic movements, including the one in Israel, from a support of the will of God to a broad support of the will of the people, especially since this will goes hand in hand with the strategic interests of Western powers and their allies in the Gulf states.

THE LIQUIDITY OF LOYALTY AND TREACHERY

Loyalty and treachery are ideological categories common to Arab political discourse in general and to Palestinian political discourse in Israel in particular (Jamal, 2004). The definition of each of these categories and the definition of the boundary that separates them are a central bone of contention in the present liquid reality of the Arab world. The question of who defines not only loyalty or treachery, but also loyalty to what and treachery to what is an important issue in understanding the development of the political debate. This is especially true when local political developments are not detached from external political forces, such as the Americans and the Russians, who compete to promote different models of reality in the Middle East.

The popular protests in some of the Arab countries led to a lively debate in Palestinian society in Israel regarding the application of the concepts of loyalty and treachery, especially considering the civil war in Syria.¹⁶ An analysis of the debates taking place among Palestinians in Israel reveals the crystallization of three different types of discourse in this society related to loyalty and treachery.¹⁷ The first discourse is mainly civil, with clear commitment to the secular national camp in the Arab world. This camp propagated the need for establishing a civil secular state in the Arab countries. Based on this worldview, and taking into consideration the disappointing developments in the Arab countries on the one hand and the rise of a chauvinist nationalistic trend in Israel on the other, it began calling for investing the political energies of Palestinian society in Israel in searching for the best formula possible to preserve the civil characteristics of the Israeli state. According to this camp, which is led by Hadash, the civil status of the Palestinian minority is at risk, and therefore a democratic coalition has to be established to protect civil rights and promote social justice. The election of young leaders to the Hadash list to the Israeli parliament (the Knesset) prior to the March 2015 elections brought about a change in the prevailing political discourse in the party and reinforced the legitimacy of the civil discourse that calls for the realization of civil rights in Palestinian society through tools that the Israeli political system enables. This civic discourse sought to find a new formula for existence in the Israeli reality, a formula that would combine civic identity, cultural pluralism, and social justice with the formula of the two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

The second discourse is that of a conformist and even opportunistic camp, which used the official civil discourse in Israel as the sole legitimate political space, to the point of complying with the demand of the state that Arab youths should fulfill their duty for civil and even military service. This camp remains limited in scope, and its supporters come from various backgrounds, among them supporters of the Zionist parties and people with narrow ethnic commitments, most of whom are a small group of Christians led by the Greek Orthodox priest Gabriel Naddaf and Muslims who are historically close to the Likud Party. This camp received formal support from the state, and legal changes were introduced to prevent the national Arab leadership from criticizing it in public and delegitimizing its efforts to encourage Arab youths to serve in the Israeli army or enroll in the civil service.

The third discourse is a skeptical one, which sees the overemphasis on civil rights as a compromise with the discriminatory Israeli reality and as a legitimization of those who are willing to bend to the will of the government and find shelter under the wings of moderate civil discourse. The proponents of this discourse emphasize the importance of distinguishing between the disintegration of some of the Arab states, which is regrettable, and the primacy of the need to continue the Palestinian national struggle for liberation from the burden of occupation, challenging the policy of right-wing nationalist governments in Israel. Although the supporters of this camp do not doubt the intentions of the followers of the first camp, they criticize the possibility of conducting a constructive dialogue with the Israeli right-wing nationalist government, which is very engaged

in promoting antidemocratic legislation that targets Palestinian citizens and seeks to either submit them to its exclusionary dictates or stigmatize them as enemies. In the face of these claims, the advocates of the first camp argue that the supporters of the national discourse are disconnected from reality and offer no practical alternatives to face the challenges that the Palestinian community in Israel faces. In addition, they argue that the use of national slogans does not provide real answers to the needs of Palestinian society in Israel and does not advance the struggle for the liberation of the Palestinian people from the burdens of occupation. According to the third discourse, only a combination of a national democratic struggle, while using all the tools that the hegemonic political structure enables, without giving in to its dictates, can bring about a significant change without jeopardizing the civil and national rights of Palestinian citizens.¹⁸

APPROPRIATING AL-MUQAWAMA AND THE CUNNING OF DISCOURSE

The perception of resistance has always invited debate and controversy. The experiences of different peoples in opposing repression and domination have led to the development of not only various forms of resistance, but also diverse conceptualizations (Camus, 1951; Caygill, 2013; Foucault, 2008; Gurr, 2015; Scott, 1990; Tarrow, 1998; Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013). These conceptualizations highlight different aspects of the phenomenon, especially the intentions of the agents under study and the recognition of their behavior by other subjects (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). The different conceptualizations demonstrate the liquidity of the phenomenon and the ability of social agents to choose different behavioral patterns in order to define them as reflecting resistance to a hegemonic power structure.

The controversy over resistance on the theoretical level has been translated into the political discourse of Palestinian society in Israel. In the past two decades, two major political camps with alternative perceptions of resistance have developed in this community. Although these camps are not homogeneous, the boundaries of their moral commitment are clear, and their categories of self-perception have developed at the heart of the political discourse as contradictory to each other. One camp constructed itself by attributing al-Muqawama to itself, mainly by identifying with states that resist American–Israeli policy in the Middle East and seek to promote the possibility that al-Muqawama’s policy will become hegemonic in the region. Since the mid-1990s, this camp has viewed Bashar el-Assad’s regime in Syria as the representative of this perception of resistance.

The al-Muqawama concept, which was the main banner of the Palestine Liberation Organization’s al-ʿAsifah forces until the early 1990s, became central in the political lexicon of this camp, following its routinization by Azmi Bishara, its central political thinker over the past three decades. At the beginning of the 2000s in Syria, Bishara spoke of the

importance of al-Muqawama, which was expressed in opposition to the American–Israeli hegemonic will, and its collaborators in the Middle East (the “marionette” regimes in the Gulf states).¹⁹ The revival of this concept, its isolation from its original Palestinian context, and its attribution to the Syrian regime and the Hezbollah organization led by Hassan Nasrallah created a clear dichotomy between the patriots of the Arab nation and custodians of its interests and those willing to compromise them.

Through the appeal of the term *al-Muqawama*, this camp succeeded in suppressing expressions of opposition to its very representation in the central institution of the Jewish state, namely the Knesset. The enormous gap between the discourse and its representation was repressed by a sophisticated political rhetoric and by promoting a clear-cut differentiation between loyalists to al-Muqawama and others, who were indirectly referred to as either lacking mature political consciousness or mere traitors. The al-Muqawama camp attributed to itself the preservation of national honor and attributed weakness to those who did not follow its lead, as if there were an exclusive recipe for judging the political behavior of the various political agents in Palestinian society in Israel.

The pursuit of exclusive appropriation of the al-Muqawama category, and the self-contradiction of the appropriating camp, aroused jealousy and opposition in the second camp, namely the Communists, who sought for decades to patronize the politics of resistance. They did not like, to say the least, the fact that Balad appropriated and redefined the concept of al-Muqawama in a way that identifies the party with the “right” side in the regional power game, especially the Syrian regime and Hezbollah—the two main actors who, under Russian inspiration, opposed American hegemony in the region. In the eyes of the Communists, Balad’s leader, Bishara, a former Communist, had betrayed the Communist Party while revoking its history and was opportunistic in his support of the Syrian regime—thus reflecting his treachery. These claims against Bishara were strengthened by what was perceived to be his “flight” from the battlefield in 2007 and even more by his decision to reside in an American-patronized nation, Qatar.²⁰ Bishara’s transition from supporting the Syrian regime to supporting the regime’s opponents after the outbreak of the Arab Spring was conclusive proof in the eyes of the Communist camp that his position—and thus the position of his camp—was pure opportunism.²¹

The presence of Bishara with Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood and a preacher of the uprising against Arab regimes, including the Syrian regime, was a clear indication in the eyes of the Communists that the Bishara camp had lost its way.²² The Communists sided with Russian policy in the region and hence with the Syrian regime and Hezbollah and expressed their clear view that the uprising in Syria was a regional conspiracy led by Gulf states aiming to bring the Muslim Brotherhood to power in Syria.²³ This position was presented as reflecting the credibility of the party and its ideological and strategic coherence. The harsh criticism of Bishara and his camp was intended to undermine the credibility of his party and reappropriate the concept of al-Muqawama, which is historically linked to opposing American hegemony in the region.

In the eyes of a growing number of Arab citizens, especially youths, the reversal of the camps reflected the downfall of ideology and exposed the anguish of politics.²⁴ A growing number of Arab citizens expressed the belief, in the wake of the nationalist radicalization of Israeli politics, that the two camps should work together to establish a common political body to deal with the new challenges posed by Israeli reality. The disappointment with events in the Arab world, especially al-Sisi's rise to power in Egypt and the deterioration of the civil war into total chaos in Syria, was viewed as sufficient justification for rethinking the political path of Palestinian society in Israel.

This growing expectation and the new electoral conditions created by the raising of the threshold to be elected to the Knesset from 2 percent to 3.25 percent in 2014 led to the adoption of rapprochement positions by the Communists, Nationalists, those affiliated with Bishara, and the Islamic Movement. This enforced rapprochement led to the establishment of the Joint List for the 2015 Knesset elections.

The establishment of the Joint List marked the decline of the historical competition over patronizing resistance as a mechanism of identity formation. This realignment in the Arab political structure had to come at the expense of the various ideological identities of the political parties. They were reminded by the ultranationalist Zionist parties in the Knesset that their spaces of maneuvering are very limited and that their ideological commitments must be subordinated to the political will of the Jewish majority, if they seek a more dignified survival for their community. Establishing the Joint List does not necessarily mean that the different partners have given up their efforts to control the political agenda of the Palestinian community.²⁵ The disintegration of the Joint List prior to the April 2019 elections marked the mutual suspension between its members and their disagreements on the pursued local and regional political aspirations. Two separate lists were established and competed for support of the public. The first list is pragmatic and included the Communists and the Arab Movement for Change. This list emphasized its civic character and prepared the ground for possible negotiations with the major Zionist party, Blue and White, in case the latter were to win a majority, which has not happened. The second list is more ideological and included Balad and the Islamic Movement. The cooperation between these two parties revealed the growing affinity between Liberal Nationalists and pragmatic Islamists in the Arab world, which is also reflected in Palestinian society in Israel. The results of the elections demonstrated a serious retreat in the public support of the two lists, because only around 50 percent of the eligible voters participated in the elections. The Arab public put substantial pressure on all political parties to reunite and rejuvenate the Joint List as the September 2019 elections approached. The increase of the voting percentage in the Palestinian community to almost 60 percent made it clear that the public did not care much about the ideological differences between the parties and preferred their joining forces in order to maximize their influence in the Israeli political arena. The shift in the public support and its markable rise in the March 2020 elections to around 65 percent reflected an emerging consensus that civil struggle for equal rights in Israel is a priority that does not stand in opposition to the commitment for Palestinian national aspirations. Resistance to the rising power of the radical nationalist right in Israel has to be placed before the dispute regarding

regional balances of power on the one hand and the liberal–religious rift on the other. The disappointment with what happened in the Arab world and the delegitimizing of Palestinian citizens’ influence in the Israeli political system have led to the rise of a new zeitgeist among them. Resistance took yet another twist that led the Joint List, including Balad, to recommend a former chief of staff of the Israeli army to the position of prime minister of the Israeli government after the March 2020 elections.

POPULAR PROTESTS AND THE POWER OF THE MASSES

The spirit of the Arab revolutions has taken hold in the younger generation of the Palestinian population in Israel. The political rhetoric of this generation, as reflected in social media, demonstrates that it seeks to escape the dictates of the veteran leadership. An examination of the patterns of organization and protest of Arab youths in recent years indicates that the perception of resistance has changed. The new perception is a kind of uprising against the political, physical, and conscious boundaries that political reality forced upon them.

The political discourse prevalent among Arab youths²⁶ shows that they oppose not only the classic political power structures, such as parties, but also the traditional power mechanisms, because they are hierarchical. They resist being subject to traditional forms of political activism, which requires committing to rigid institutional frameworks and fetishistic party ideology. They seek a more decentralized model that enables flexible cooperation between political activists on a common agenda, despite physical distance and the lack of complete ideological agreement.²⁷ This political discourse of youth is a fluid one, reflected in varying forms of action, and seeks expression in accordance with considerations of prominence and effectiveness. This trend has culminated in the modus operandi of the Joint List as manifested in the digital activism of its young leaders in the last three rounds of elections in Israel.

On the popular level, this emerging modus operandi was best translated into the struggle against the Praver Plan, which sought to deprive Bedouin citizens of their land in the Negev.²⁸ Groups of young people took over the reins and promoted protests that sought to bypass not only the state’s supervisory mechanisms, but also the frameworks of the political parties (Ebenberi, 2018). Young people with no clear party commitment worked to promote widespread protest and did so without resorting to a centralized mechanism, which takes upon itself the logistical organization and controls the flow of information. Despite the fact that party leaders joined the protests, they were not subject to rigid institutional considerations.

The young activists took advantage of the new media, as did the young generation in the upheavals in the Arab countries. Although it is not correct to argue that the new media created the change in the patterns of political conduct of the youth, the wise and

strategic use of these media has shown that they advance change, enable bridging the challenges of space, and help focus the discourse in a manner that stimulates a broad public consciousness.

The use of new media tools undermined the channels of communication of the institutionalized leadership, demonstrating an alternative concept of leadership, a concept that is more democratic, more egalitarian, and more mobilized.²⁹ The number of electronic campaigns active in the Palestinian arena in Israel, such as “Love during Apartheid,”³⁰ “Orfud Sha’abak Byehmik”³¹ (“Refuse and your people will protect you”), “Maesmhash Hek,”³² and “al-Taharush howi taharush” (Harassment is harassment)³³ demonstrates that the younger generation is politically involved in its own ways and adopts methods of action different from those used until recently, adapted to the digital age in which this generation lives.

The political protest against the Praver Plan halted its implementation and forced the government to seek alternative plans and their gradual implementation. The protest against the recruitment of Arab youths for civilian or military service has raised awareness of the Israel government’s fragmenting policies.³⁴ Nonetheless, the sophisticated electronic and digital protests have not managed to deal with the government’s exploitation of the paralysis in the Arab world to promote its branding strategy of military superiority in the region and its identity as a democratic model, which stands as a possible alternative to the reality of chaos and tragedy taking place in the world to which many Arab citizens feel culturally and politically related. The inability to influence what is happening in the Arab world and to effectively oppose the rapid growth and militancy of the nationalistic right wing in Israel, along with the ineffectiveness of Arab politics, constitutes a highly charged political context that many young Arabs know and live in. The search for new methods of struggle against the repressive Israeli reality and the disappointing reality in the Arab world apparently cannot be resolved with digital means. Protest in social media may look attractive but does not bring about the expected tangible transformation of the entire political system, as Balibar (2002) would put it. The high percentage of those abstaining from taking part in the 2019 and 2020 Israeli parliamentary elections seems to reflect one avenue to express dissatisfaction with the patterns of conduct of their leaders, combined with a protest against the Israeli electoral system. Proponents of this large camp argue that Israel exploits Palestinian participation in elections to brand itself as a democratic state, despite the fact that millions of Palestinians live under its military occupation on the one hand and that Palestinian citizens are discriminated against on the other.

The situation in which the younger generation grew up—an Israeli nationalistic political reality that also provides economic conditions that cannot be ignored compared to what they see in the Arab world—causes many dilemmas and leads to complex patterns of behavior. Thus, a significant part of this generation reflects rejection of Jewish hegemony and is unwilling to accept its exclusion and discrimination by the state. It rejects the social culture of its parents and adopts more courageous behavioral patterns on moral and political levels.³⁵ Notwithstanding this social and political context that enables the

emergence of repressed revolutionary spirit among Arab youths, which can erupt at any time if the historic conditions permit, the experience of the last few years, especially what has happened in the Arab Spring states, seems to have had a moderating effect on this revolutionary spirit of the youths.³⁶ The deep sense of relative deprivation among them seems to be balanced by the sense of economic opportunities available in the booming Israeli economy. Seeking economic opportunities, realigning behind the Joint List, and celebrating their ability to express their national and cultural identity via digital tools seem to be the trademarks of most of the young Palestinian generation in Israel.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Arab political discourse of recent years indicates that Arab social and political forces were not only inspired by developments in some Arab countries, but also adopted the subversive discourse of the revolutionary forces and redefined their concepts, thus reflecting their willingness to reconsider their position. The discourse of revolutionary enthusiasm that characterized the political discourse of the Palestinians in Israel concerning Arab countries, reflected in the willingness to break all rules possible for the sake of a new future, has become a more cautious discourse of protest, based on an incremental civil transformational perception, when faced with their own reality.

This development stems from the fact that the discourse of relative deprivation has encountered difficulties due to the inability to rise up against state policy, in a situation in which political discourse in the Arab world is stuck between secular and religious authoritarian alternatives. The present Hobbesian situation in Syria, and the familiarity of Palestinian citizens of Israel with the phenomenon of refuge and the memory of the *nakba*, make them cautious about the level of risk they are willing to take in dealing with their relative deprivation in Israel.

The discursive debates among Palestinians in Israel demonstrate that their inspiration by popular mobilization in the Arab world is balanced by the fear of losing the standard of living that they have achieved in Israel in spite of the state's discriminatory policies. Despite the subversive discourse of the younger generation, the willingness to cope with Israeli policies of subordination remains captive within a pragmatic active citizenship. The search for equality and freedom is mostly conducted by infrapolitical means that meet Scott's depictions (1990). These efforts demonstrate the emancipatory, transformative, and civil characteristics of Arab politics in the face of growing nationalist politics in Israeli Jewish society.

The technological sophistication of protests conducted by the young Arab generation undermines the basic concepts of state authority but also the power hierarchies in Arab society itself. The hidden transcript of youths' politics expresses the hybrid nature of

their subordinated identity. Their bourgeois life, reflected in a well-groomed daily life, is the other side of the digital contentious discourse. The struggle to determine the meaning of Palestinian resistance in Israel has been imported by the young Arab generation, which swings between subversion and elusive politics.

NOTES

1. "Israeli security forces admit that three Arabs from Israel join ISIS," *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, October 13, 2014, retrieved from <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=234298>; and A. Shahboon, "Israelis join ISIS," *Al-Ahram*, March 7, 2017, retrieved from <http://www.ahram.org>. Also, several Israeli citizens were sentenced to jail terms for joining ISIS or for attempting to join the organization. See, for example, Criminal Cases 48354-11-14 and 252-02-15 in the District Court of Nazareth; Criminal Cases 58803-06-15 and 25796-06-15 in the District Court of Beer Sheba; and Criminal Appeals 8333/15, 8621/15, 6699/17, and 6858/17 at the Supreme Court.
2. Many made this comparison during discussions in several round tables that took place in March and May 2011. This tone began changing when the protests began taking place in Syria and the regime reacted with aggression.
3. This atmosphere was expressed by several speakers in an open discussion that took place at Radio Ashams and was broadcast live on March 4, 2011.
4. These voices were apparent in public and were expressed in a round-table discussion organized at Al-Ayn Hotel in Nazareth on December 22, 2012.
5. The divisions and schisms between and within the Arab parties regarding Syria were very apparent after the Syrian regime had launched a chemical attack in the area of Idlib and American airstrikes followed. See J. Khoury, "Israeli Arab party fails to condemn Assad's gas attack in Syria, slams U.S. strikes," *Haaretz*, April 9, 2017, retrieved from <https://www.haaretz.com/>; see also R. Wootliff, "Mostly mum on chemical attack, Israel's Arab MKs divided on Assad," *The Times of Israel*, April 9, 2017, retrieved from <https://www.timesofisrael.com/>.
6. This analysis was presented in several round-table discussions that took place in Nazareth, on December 17, 2011; December 22, 2012; and September 24, 2013.
7. These positions were reflected in a heavy debate on Facebook, which reached accusations of being naive or stupid on the one hand and traitors and fifth columnists on the other. Two examples are the Facebook exchanges that took place on December 2, 2011, and April 7, 2013.
8. This position was clearly expressed by a member of Knesset from the Islamic Movement, who took part in a debate on the topic in Nazareth on September 21, 2012.
9. See A. Bishara, "Arab states sought normalization with Israel under the cover of the al-Aqsa crisis," referring to this topic, retrieved from <https://www.arab48.com/>. See an entire Al-Jazeera program devoted to the topic: "Position assessment" retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QRTFv4zZPw>.
10. See the rally organized by the Islamic Movement on July 13, 2013, against the coup led by the Egyptian army against the regime of Mohamed Morsi, "Speech by Kamal Khatib, deputy head of the Islamic Movement," retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSBNIwdqqkY>.
11. The Islamic Movement protested against the treatment that leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood receive from Al-Sisi regime in Kufar Kanna on May 23, 2015. See "The Islamic Movement protests the verdict on Morsi," (no author), retrieved from <https://www.arab48.com/>.

12. See "Speech by Raed Salah, leader of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement" on Syria and the sovereignty of the people on June 17, 2013, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRfbJ4fSfo>.
13. This opinion was expressed in more than one round table organized on the topic, in Nazareth on June 28, 2011, and December 22, 2012.
14. Round table in Nazareth on December 22, 2012.
15. Round table in Nazareth on December 22, 2012.
16. Round table in Nazareth on June 28, 2011.
17. This analysis is based on the discussions that took place in several round tables on the topic in Nazareth, on June 28, 2011; December 22, 2012; and September 24, 2013.
18. Nimer Sultany, "The Joint List: The fetishism of representation and the illusion of influence," January 23, 2020, retrieved from <https://www.masarat.ps/>
19. See the interviews conducted by S. Abu Fakhri with Azmi Bishara, published (in Arabic) in *Exiling Exile*, available online at <https://www.alaraby.co.uk>.
20. See interview with Mohamed Barakeh, head of Hadash, conducted by G. Weitz, "We still didn't lose our hope," *Haaretz*, November 20, 2014, retrieved from <https://www.haaretz.co.il/1.2490558>. See also what Barakeh said in an interview with S. Ilan, "Bishara should come back and face the allegations," *Haaretz*, April 29, 2007, retrieved from <https://www.haaretz.co.il/1.1550257>.
21. Round table in Nazareth on December 17, 2011.
22. This opinion was expressed by several representatives of Hadash in round tables organized on the political transformation among Palestinian citizens of Israel on December 17, 2012.
23. See the interview on this topic with Mohamed Nafa'a, the secretary general of Hadas, retrieved from <http://www.m.ahewar.org/s.asp?aid=276445&r=25&cid=o&u=&i=1484&q=>.
24. Round table in Nazareth on April 29, 2016.
25. J. Khoury, "Arab leaders slam Joint List party infighting, warn rift could impact election," *Haaretz*, August 1, 2017, retrieved from <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-arab-leaders-slam-joint-list-party-infighting-warn-rift-could-impact-election-1.5438351>.
26. This is based on discussions in four round tables organized on the topic in Nazareth, on August 15, 2013; September 29, 2013; May 3, 2014; and June 28, 2014.
27. Round-table discussion in Nazareth on June 28, 2014.
28. On the Praver Plan, see Adalah's report, "Demolition and eviction of Bedouin citizens of Israel in the Naqab (Negev)—The Praver Plan," retrieved from <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/7589>.
29. Round-table discussion on patterns of mobilization among the Palestinian youths in Israel, in Nazareth on May 3, 2014.
30. See Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/loveinthetimeofapartheid/>.
31. See Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/irefuse.info/>.
32. See Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/maesmhashhek/>.
33. See <https://7amleh.org/>.
34. J. Khoury, "Poll: More than half [of] Israeli Arab youth oppose national service," *Haaretz*, September 15, 2009, retrieved from <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5460684>.
35. These opinions were expressed in a round table organized in Nazareth on May 13, 2016.
36. These opinions were expressed in a round table organized in Nazareth on April 29, 2016.

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CHAPTER 14

PUBLIC OPINION IN ISRAEL

The Sociodemographic Nexus

TAMAR HERMANN

“THE public is dumb and therefore the public pays,” the singer-songwriter Shalom Hanoch sarcastically quoted a demeaning comment made in 1983 by the then Israeli finance minister, Yoram Aridor. This quote, included on Hanoch’s highly successful 1985 album *Waiting for the Messiah*, was one of the first expressions of public frustration and anger at the country’s leaders for their overconcentration on narrow personal and partisan interests while turning a blind eye and a cold shoulder to their constituencies. To be sure, the messiah has not yet come, but Israelis have certainly become more frustrated and disillusioned, and the gap between the citizens and their leaders has deepened critically. Yet today no Israeli politician in his or her right mind would say anything like that. As in many other liberal democracies (Burstein, 2003), in Israel over the past few decades public opinion has become a key political factor, some would even say a Moloch that is not to be mocked or ignored. Tactically and rhetorically, Israeli officeholders very often present themselves as abiding by the public’s views and interests and as fulfilling its demands,¹ while paying lip service to the democratic core value of the people’s sovereignty, a typical feature of populist politics (Müller, 2016).

The politicians’ self-portrayal as the servants of the people, in certain cases perhaps even an authentic self-perception, does not resonate well today with the Israeli public. Trust in the political system, as well as in the media, another political socializing agent, is disturbingly low. The decreased trust in these political movers and shakers leaves very wide room for other factors to affect public opinion. Certain sociodemographic affiliations have become highly influential, in most cases in a divisive manner. In the past, the “fathers of the nation,” though never devoid of parochial political interests, and the then much more centralized media saw it as their duty to build and sustain a national consensus. Today the politicians and the media not infrequently (ab)use the deep sociodemographic and sociopolitical cleavages within the Israeli cit-

izenry to gain popularity and power, thereby creating a vicious cycle in which the already quite diminished national consensus is further eroded.

This chapter presents and analyzes long-standing features of Israeli (political) public opinion while demonstrating the strong impact of the main sociodemographic and political cleavages and the overlap among them. The first of the three main sections discusses the overall structure of Israeli public opinion and its main subsectors. The second section analyzes the two main foci of the public discourse—the nature of the State of Israel and the external, Israeli–Palestinian conflict—along the division lines presented in the first section. The third section focuses on the way in which two formerly central political socializing agents—the media and the politicians—are perceived today by Israelis. The negative images of them, it is maintained, are at least a partial explanation for the strongly divisive effects of the sociodemographic and political cleavages and for the decline in the status of these traditional agents as the architects of the much needed, yet today lacking, national consensus.²

ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION: MAIN FEATURES AND CLEAVAGES

In general, Israeli public opinion displays two features: (a) it is greatly politicized and informed, and (b) it is quite constant, because of the strong sociodemographic–political nexus on which it stands.

Even compared to the citizenry in the well-established, liberal Western democracies, let alone to Middle Eastern societies and relatively new postcolonial democracies, Israeli society in general is highly politicized and quite well informed. This is manifested in many ways, such as a large electoral turnout³ and lively political participation.⁴ The high political awareness is also reflected in the self-reported, frequent, individual engagement in political discussions (Hermann et al., 2017b, p. 135). There are many reasons for this feature (Smootha, 2010), but first and foremost, it has to do with the protracted external conflict, which affects the lives of all Israelis and increases their political awareness regardless of their specific views. In addition, this elevated politicization is augmented by the population's relatively high average level of education⁵ as well as by the Jewish culture, which historically allowed and even encouraged religious contentiousness and even dissent (Shapira & Fisch, 1999).

Although public opinion may be fictitious (Bourdieu, 1979) or real, nowhere is it ever homogeneous. This is fine as long as there are some threads that bring together the various subsectors. But in many respects, it is maintained here, as of today Israeli public opinion is divided on certain critical issues to the point that it is not clear to what extent it can be seen as a whole. The rifts between the subsectors—which the president of the country, Reuven Rivlin, described in his much-cited speech in 2015 as “tribes”⁶—should be addressed at this initial stage: the first rift is between the Jewish and Arab sectors. The

aforementioned relatively intense political interest and involvement characterize more the Jewish majority group. The large Israeli Arab minority group, presently constituting around one-fifth of the population (16 percent of the eligible voters age eighteen and over), is less politically engaged.⁷ This discrepancy between the majority and the minority groups might be explained by other objective factors, such as the Israeli Arabs' lower levels of education and income compared to the Jews.⁸ Yet apparently it has much more to do with the ongoing marginalization of the Israeli Arab minority (Wattad, 2007). The Israeli Arabs were and still are sidelined politically, economically, and socially because of their affiliation and identification with the Arab-Palestinian nation, with which Israel has been at war for many years.⁹ Hence many Israeli Arabs, particularly those of lower education and income, who are more susceptible to pressure from the authorities and less aware of their civil rights, often refrain from expressing their political views and from taking part in political activities. A majority of the Arab respondents, as opposed to a minority of the Jewish respondents, expressed concern that in the future their freedom of speech would be curtailed (Hermann et al., 2017a).¹⁰ In addition, three-quarters of the Arab respondents said in this survey that they rarely discuss political issues with other people, compared to somewhat over half of the Jewish interviewees who said that they do so very often. Furthermore, a majority of the Arab respondents reported that they refrain from discussing political matters in the presence of people they do not know, compared to only 28 percent of the Jewish interviewees. These feelings have become stronger since the Nation State Law (enacted in 2018) defined Israel as the nation state of solely the Jewish people.

The discrepancy between the Jewish and Arab sectors is manifested not only in the different socioeconomic levels and their distinct political engagement levels but also in their respective political self-positioning along the most significant Right–Left political spectrum.¹¹ As indicated in Figures 14.1 and 14.2, which are based on a number of monthly Peace Index Surveys, a significant number of the Arabs, often around or even more than 25 percent, do not find their place in any political bloc (or refuse to disclose their stance for the reasons previously mentioned). Of the Arab interviewees who specified their political position, the largest group used to self-locate itself on the Left, but in

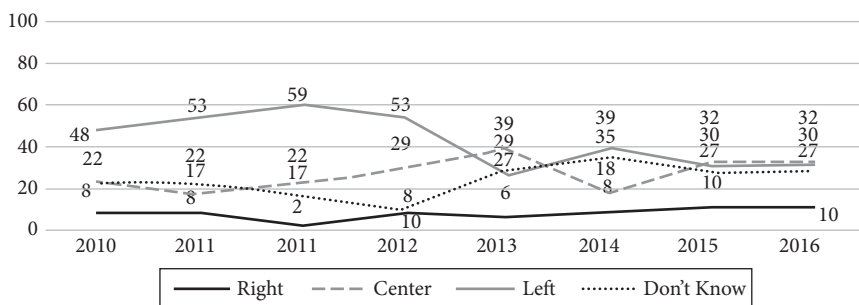


FIGURE 14.1 The Israeli political-bloc structure (% Arabs, 2010–2016).

Source: Based on the Peace Index survey findings, 2010–2016.

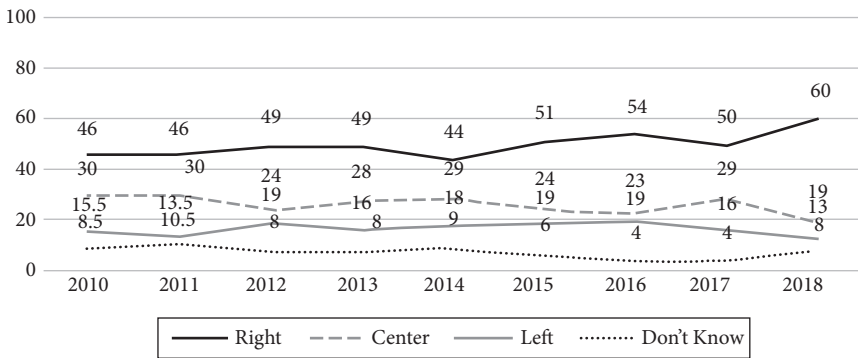


FIGURE 14.2 The Israeli political-bloc structure (% Jews, 2010–2016).

Source: Based on the Peace Index survey findings, 2010–2016.

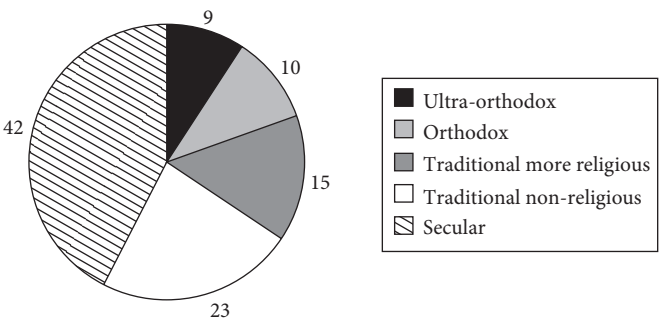


FIGURE 14.3 The Jewish population by religiosity (%).

Source: Data from Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, <https://www.cbs.gov.il/en/mediarelease/Pages/2018/Religion-And-Self-Definition-Of-Extent-Of-Religiosity-Selected-Data-From-The-Society-In-Israel-Report-No-10.aspx>

recent years more than in the past prefer to locate themselves at the center following the emergence of a new, young Arab middle class.¹² The political preferences of the Jewish sector are the opposite: a majority is self-located on the Right and only a few on the Left. The small number of “Don’t knows” in the Jewish sample is another indication of this sector’s high political awareness.

This brief analysis has touched upon the most severe—namely, the Jewish–Arab—cleavage in Israeli society and public opinion. The other cleavages are within the Israeli Jewish majority group.

The second cleavage in terms of its divisive effects is the one along the religiosity continuum. Figure 14.3, which is based on data from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (2016),¹³ presents the present proportions of the main relevant religious categories.

These data indicate that today, unlike in the past, the more religious groups outnumber the secular ones.¹⁴ By itself this modification of the population composition is perhaps intriguing but not particularly important for this discussion. Yet it becomes

Table 14.1 Political (Self-)Positioning by Religiosity, Peace Index Surveys, 2010–2018 (Mean of Jews)

Group	Right	Center	Left	Don't Know/Refuse to Answer
Ultra-Orthodox	70.2	14.8	3.4	11.6
Orthodox	80.5	11.4	3.7	4.4
Traditional (more religious)	58.3	24.7	9.5	7.5
Traditional (nonreligious)	56.5	27.2	7.8	8.5
Secular	33.5	32.0	27.4	7.1

both interesting and critical once the correlation between the various religiosity groups and their political position is revealed. As Table 14.1 suggests, in the Israeli Jewish case the linkage between religiosity and political (self-)positioning is particularly strong.

Apparently, unlike the secular group, which is evenly split among the Right, center, and Left, all other religious groups are characterized by a clear inclination toward the political Right, with only very small Left minorities. This means that not only is the Israeli political map no longer equally divided between the Right and the Left, as it was until the mid-1990s, but as long as this correlation between level of religiosity and political preferences stays intact, the Right will almost inevitably have the upper hand in future elections, as the birthrate of the non-secular groups is notably higher.

Empirical studies have also shown repeatedly that the religiosity scale division is significantly correlated with the Jewish ethnic origin (Ashkenazi–Mizrahi) division (Shamir & Shamir, 2000). In general, Jewish Israelis of Ashkenazi origin tend to be more secular, while those of Mizrahi background tend to be traditional, Orthodox, and ultra-Orthodox. The correlation here is somewhat weaker than in the former case, that is, religiosity and political position, but it is still of political importance because of the correlation previously discussed. Through the religious factor, then, the Left–Right division in Israeli Jewish public opinion is also correlated with ethnic origin (Yuchtman-Yaar & Alkalay, 2018). Israeli Jews of Ashkenazi origin tend to be more secular and located politically more in the center and left of center, while those of Mizrahi origin tend to be more religious and situated more to the right politically. Besides their greater religiosity, there are several explanations for the Mizrahi Jews' attraction to the political Right: their dismal recollections of the deprivation, discrimination, and humiliation that their parents and grandparents experienced upon their arrival in Israel, then governed by the mostly Ashkenazi, socialist Labor Party; the sense that Likud, the main party of the Right, offers more opportunities for upward mobility for non-Ashkenazi individuals as opposed to the elitist, closed image of the again mostly Ashkenazi Left; and the Mizrahi preference for the Jewish ethnonational discourse of the Right over the more universalist orientation of the Left. Another explanation attributes the Mizrahi preference for the Right's hawkish political worldview to the efforts of the Jews who came to Israel from

Middle Eastern countries and their descendants to disassociate themselves from the Palestinians and the Arabs, who are perceived as enemies (Peled & Shafir, 2008). There is also a socioeconomic explanation for the Mizrahi preference for the political Right: their relatively disadvantaged socioeconomic status, which—not only in Israel—is associated with particularistic, ethnonationalistic political views (Hochschild, 2016).

Education and income, factors known to be very powerful in various political contexts, appear to be less so (*per se*) in the Israeli case. This is at least partly because, again, they strongly correlate with the religiosity and ethnic descent factors; in general, the more religious a group is, the less prosperous economically and the less formally educated it is.¹⁵ A similar correlation is found between economic prosperity and education on the one hand, and the ethnic descent of Israeli Jews on the other; the Ashkenazi group is better off economically and more highly educated (Kaplan, 2015).

Together, these linkage sets create a sociopolitical order marked by “overlapping cleavages,” which has been found to be unsafe for the stability of democratic regimes, as the domestic cleavages do not mitigate but in fact reinforce each other. This contrasts with the “cross-cutting cleavages” situation, in which the group affiliation structure enables and even encourages concurrent political alliances (Lipset & Stein Rokkan, 1967).

MAIN DIVISIVE ISSUES

Israeli society constantly faces acute internal and external challenges. However, the preferred ways of dealing with these challenges are intensely disputed along the division lines previously discussed, to the point that reaching a solid national consensus is now practically impossible. Moreover, Israel does not have a written constitution and hence lacks a clear set of constitutional values according to which such disputes can be settled and national policies can be shaped. It also lacks legally recognized borders to define the territory in which such policies are applicable. This situation is particularly problematic with regard to two critical issues: the nature of the State of Israel and the resolution of the external conflict.

The Nature of the State of Israel

The definition of the State of Israel as Jewish and democratic was not set forth in the Proclamation of Independence.¹⁶ Israel was described there as “a Jewish State in the Land of Israel,” and while the text indeed mentioned various democratic values, the word “democracy” was missing. The hyphenated Jewish-and-democratic definition was stated formally for the first time only in 1992, in the Basic Laws on Freedom of Occupation and on Human Dignity and Liberty. Indeed, the debate over the proper balance between the Jewish and democratic components was conducted well before the

early 1990s. However, since the legal formalization of this definition, the constructive ambiguity of the past has vanished, and the disputes over the proper order and relative weight of the two components have grown much more antagonistic. Many on the left of center doubt whether a Jewish state can indeed be fully democratic, while many on the right of center question the extent to which a fully democratic state, where all nationalities and religions are on an equal footing, can completely fulfill the Zionist undertaking of a national home for the Jewish people. Thus political actors of the Right tried for years to legally prioritize the Jewish component over the democratic one by enacting a new Basic Law, Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People.¹⁷ This effort is strongly opposed by the Left and even more so by the Arab minority; both believe that it is anti-democratic and would turn Israel into an ethnocratic state. Eventually, as already mentioned, in July 2018 the law was enacted, a move that indeed brought in its wake a large wave of political protest that changed very little, if anything, in the new discriminating reality.

Israeli public opinion on the nature of the state is divided along the cleavages previously described. The most acute disagreement in this regard is the Jewish–Arab one. Over two-thirds of the Israeli Arabs believe that Israel does not have the right to define itself as the national state of the Jewish people (Hermann et al., 2017a, p. 64; Pew Research Center, 2016), while a Jewish majority supports the statement that “people who refuse to declare the State of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people should be stripped of their right to vote” (Hermann et al., 2017a). Furthermore, as indicated by the findings in Tables 14.2 and 14.3, whereas “democratic state” is understood in a similar, positive manner by the Jews and the Arabs, “Jewish state” is interpreted totally differently by the two sectors. Whereas for the Jews it bears mostly positive connotations, for the Arabs it bears essentially highly negative ones (Hermann et al., 2017b, p. 81).¹⁸

As shown in Table 14.4, when asked to assess the relative weight of the Jewish and the democratic components in Israel today, the majority in both sectors viewed the present state of affairs as biased in favor of the Jewish component, but in the Arab sector this perception was far more prevalent (Hermann et al., 2017b, p. 83).

Table 14.2 Meaning of “Democratic State” by Nationality (%)

Jews	Top Three Connotations
Freedom (in general)	23
Freedom of speech	23
People's sovereignty	19
Arabs	
Freedom (in general)	22.5
Freedom of speech	24
Equality	26

Table 14.3 Meaning of "Jewish State" by Nationality (%)

Jews	Top Three Connotations (%)
Jewish nationalism	47
Jewish religion	30
Democracy and tolerance	9.5
Arabs	
Racism	29
Exclusive Jewishness	26
Nondemocratic state	18

Table 14.4 Balance between Jewish and Democratic Components in Israel by Nationality (%)

Jews	
The situation is properly balanced.	29
The Jewish component is too strong.	42
The democratic component is too strong.	23
Don't know.	6
Arabs	
The situation is properly balanced.	16
The Jewish component is too strong.	74
The democratic component is too strong.	6
Don't know.	4

Another element of discord between Israeli Jews and Arabs in this sphere is reflected in their contradictory assessments of the extent to which Israel is democratic for its Arab citizens; over two-thirds of the Arab sample replied in the negative, while a majority of the Jewish one replied in the affirmative (Hermann et al., 2017a, p. 63). However, when the latter sample was dissected along the Right–Left cleavage, the result was quite heterogeneous: among those self-located on the Left only a minority regarded Israel as democratic as far as its Arab citizens were concerned, while among those on the Right a large majority considered it democratic toward the Arab minority (Hermann et al., 2017a, p. 68).

The religiosity scale is also very much present in the dispute over the Jewish versus democratic question. Most members of the ultra-Orthodox and Orthodox groups, and also among the two traditionalist groups, see the Jewish component as the primary one, while members of the secular group give more emphasis to the democratic aspect. Although the overlap between this division and the Right–Left one is not total, it is quite significant. It is not complete because, except for the extremist subgroups on both sides, neither the mainstream Orthodox groups nor the secular groups dismiss the “other” component—the democratic for the former and the Jewish for the latter. It is the proper

Table 14.5 Balance between Jewish and Democratic Components by Level of Religiosity (% Jews)

Ultra-Orthodox	Orthodox	Traditional (More Religious)	Traditional (Nonreligious)	Secular	
16	39	42	31	25	The situation is properly balanced.
11	12	27	39	61	The Jewish component is too strong.
56	44	25	24	8	The democratic component is too strong.
17	5	6	6	6	Don't know.
100	100	100	100	100	Total

Table 14.6 Preferred Balance between Jewish and Democratic Components (% Jews)

Right	Center	Left	Preference
46	46	31	Both to the same extent
13	46	65	The democratic one
39	6	4	The Jewish one
2	2	—	Don't know
100	100	100	Total

weight of each that they struggle over, not their existence. Table 14.5 indicates that only among the traditional more religious does the plurality assess the two components as properly balanced at the moment. A large majority of the secular consider the Jewish component to be too strong, while a majority of the ultra-Orthodox and a plurality of the Orthodox see the democratic component that way (Hermann et.al., 2017b, p. 83).

The incomplete overlap is also due to the fact that, as Table 14.6 shows, on the Right there is no clear majority for the domination of the Jewish component; the plurality here would like both components to be equally strong, with a stronger Jewish component as only the second preferred option. On the Left, however, a large majority favors a stronger democratic component.

This subsection has demonstrated the extent to which Israeli public opinion on the nature of the state is split along the dividing lines described in the first part of the chapter. It has also pointed to commonalities between the religious and the Right–Left scales. The next subsection shows similar divisions and overlap in a different realm: the external Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

The Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

As mentioned previously, the external protracted conflict is one of the main reasons for the Israelis' extensive politicization, at the heart of which stands the Right–Left division (Hermann, 2018). The location of individuals and groups on one or the other side of this cleavage is a major individual and collective signifier in Israeli politics and society today.

As Figure 14.4 shows, most Israeli Jews see the Palestinian side as more responsible not just for the conflict itself, but also for the repeated failures to reach a peace agreement. On the Right the majority who think so reaches some 80 percent. On the Left the majority (53 percent) puts the blame on both sides to the same extent. In both Israeli political blocs, the number of those taking responsibility for the failure to achieve peace is small: 5 percent on the Right and 15 percent on the Left. The Israeli Arabs' opinion pattern is fairly similar to that of the Jewish Left: the majority assigns the blame evenly to the two sides (Peace Index Survey, 2017).

The religious factor is highly effective here as well and strongly correlated with the Right–Left division. Like the Right, in the ultra-Orthodox and Orthodox groups large majorities place the blame entirely on the Palestinian side (83 percent and 82 percent, respectively). In both traditional groups most respondents went in the same direction, with the majorities fairly close to the opinion of the Right (63 percent and 74.5 percent, respectively). Among the secular group about half saw the problem in the same way. In other words, the more religious Israeli Jewish individuals or groups are, the more they tend to blame the Palestinians for passing up peace.

At the same time, most Israelis want the peace talks to continue, but only a small minority believes they are likely to bear fruit. Figure 14.5 indicates that this gap between support and belief has been very stable over the years.

The Peace Index Surveys consistently show that the Israeli Arabs are more supportive of the Israeli–Palestinian talks than the Jews (and also than the Palestinians; Shikaki & Hermann, 2016). However, both Jews and Arabs (as well as the Palestinians) are pessi-

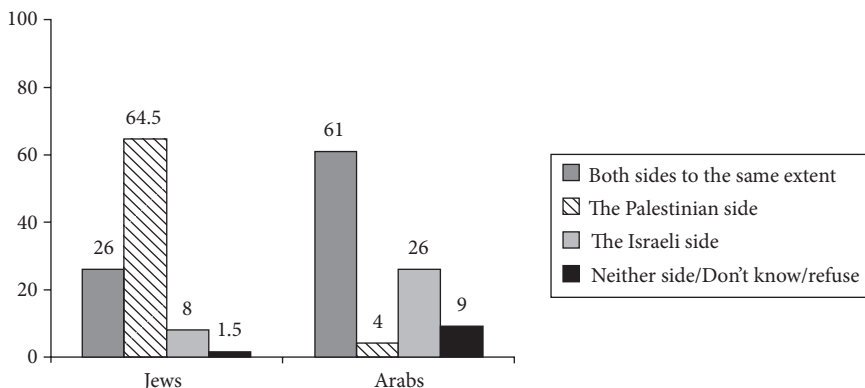


FIGURE 14.4 Responsibility for the failure to reach a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians (% by nationality).

Source: Peace Index survey, August 2017.

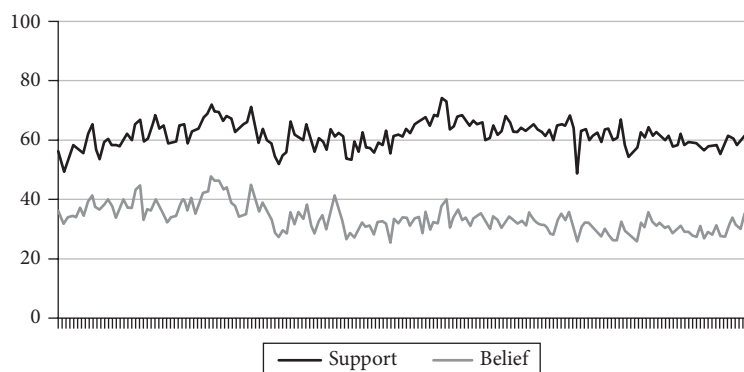


FIGURE 14.5 Support vs. belief in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (monthly means, Peace Index, June 2001–April 2017).

Source: Peace Index, June 2001–April 2017

mistic about the negotiations' potential for peacemaking. As a rule, around two-thirds of the Jews and above 85 percent of the Arabs surveyed support the talks. Yet only about one-fifth of the Israeli Jews and Arabs believe that the negotiations will produce a peace treaty in the foreseeable future (Peace Index Survey, 2017).

How is this question viewed by the Jewish Right and Left? Support for the negotiations is shared by somewhat less than half of the Right (44 percent) and a huge majority of the Left (95 percent). As for the belief in the negotiations' potential, a massive difference emerges between the two political blocs: only 8 percent of the Right, as opposed to 58 percent of the Left, believe that the talks will lead to peace. Regarding the religious factor, here the statistical differences are smaller because, as mentioned previously, not all the secular are located on the Left: 8 percent of the ultra-Orthodox, 7 percent of the Orthodox, 21 percent of both traditional groups, and 29 percent of the secular believe that the peace talks will bear fruit.

The last question to be discussed here concerns the Israelis' attitudes toward the two-states-for-two-peoples solution. It is worth recalling that until the early 1990s, only a tiny Left-leaning minority (5–10 percent) supported the idea of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. Then, for a decade—from the signing in the early to mid-1990s of various documents as part of the Oslo Accords to the mid-2000s—there was a clear, though admittedly never very large, Jewish majority in favor of the two-state formula. However, following the second intifada in the early 2000s, and even more so in the wake of the many failed negotiation rounds, a large number of Israeli Jews who formerly had supported this formula lost faith in its feasibility, though more than a few of them still support the idea of two independent states existing beside each other. It should be noted that this loss of interest has not been followed thus far by the emergence of a new, widely acceptable solution; hence, even if less supported, the two-state solution is still in fact the only real game in town.¹⁹

The stronger interest of the Israeli Arabs in continuing the peace talks has already been mentioned. The same gap emerges as far as the two-state solution is concerned: the

Arabs are much more in favor of it than the Jews. For example, in the August 2017 Peace Index Survey, 47 percent of the Jewish respondents said that if Israel and the Palestinian Authority were to agree on a peace treaty based on the two-state solution, they would support it, compared to 87 percent of the Arab sample.²⁰

The intra-Jewish Right–Left division on this question is pronounced. The same survey found that on the Right, only about a quarter stated that they would support a two-state-based agreement, while on the Left a large majority favored such an arrangement (86 percent). On this question the overlap between the Right–Left and the religion-based divisions is striking: among the ultra-Orthodox and Orthodox groups only a small minority (around 25 percent in both cases) said, like the right-wingers, that they would support a two-state-based agreement; among the secular group, similar to the Left bloc, a large majority (80 percent) approved such an agreement.

MAIN AGENTS

Public opinion does not develop by itself or in a vacuum. It is shaped by various social agents as well as through a conversational process, amicable or antagonistic, between like-minded and at-odds groups. This section focuses on two such primary agents, the media and the politicians, who supposedly are the movers and shakers of grassroots political awareness and views. Yet as previously mentioned and as discussed here, the Israeli public holds quite negative views of these agents. The data suggest that in this regard, Israeli public opinion is much less divided than on the former two topics. Ironically, whereas on the core issues there are several “public opinions” in Israel, as far as these two agents are concerned a (negative) consensus seems to have formed. Indeed, this calls for serious empirical research. It seems reasonable, however, to hypothesize that this consensus undermines the media’s and the politicians’ ability to function as successful mediators between the citizens and the political world.

The Media

The media play a central role in informing the public about what happens in the world, particularly in areas where their audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience (Happer & Philo, 2013). Whereas in the past the media were presumed to almost dictate people’s opinions, today there is a scholarly consensus that their influence is more limited. They may shape the public discourse in terms of setting agendas and focusing public interest on particular subjects, but they are less influential in the sphere of attitude shaping. The media do not determine what people think; people, in particular the more educated ones, do not absorb media messages uncritically (Philo, 2008). Moreover, with the emergence of new social media and social networks, the role of the traditional media (printed press, radio, and TV) has significantly contracted though not (yet?) dissipated.

Which of the media outlets, then, serve Israelis the most nowadays in providing political knowledge? Apparently Israel is still quite conservative in this regard: 52 percent of the Jews and 57 percent of the Arabs said that they received their political information from the various TV channels (Hermann et al., 2017b, p. 169). The differences between the political blocs were not very large, either: 46 percent of the Right and 42 percent of the Left said that most of their political information came from TV. As expected, the younger age cohorts make more use of social networks, yet in Israel, for the time being, they also rely more for political information on TV reports. As Table 14.7 suggests, social media are still taken with a grain of salt, even by young audiences.

At the same time, Israelis' overall trust in the media is extremely low. This must have to do with the fact that many Israelis think the media are biased, painting reality in colors much too dark. The Right–Left division is very pronounced in this case; a majority of the Jews self-located on the Left, the political bloc most critical of the right-wing government and the reality created by its policies, disagreed that the media reports were too dismal compared to the real state of affairs, while only a minority of those on the Right, who most probably were much less critical of the government and more satisfied with its policies and their consequences, disagreed with that view (Hermann et al., 2017b, p. 172).

As for the religious factor, it again overlaps to a great extent with the Right–Left division but is more polarized on the issue of the specific media representation of reality. Only among the secular group did a majority believe that the dark picture portrayed by the media reflects reality as it is; among all the other groups—the ultra-Orthodox, the Orthodox, and the two traditional ones—the majorities considered the media and their reporting to be deficient.

Nevertheless, large majorities of both the Jewish and Arab samples objected to a law that would give the government the authority to close down a media channel for harshly criticizing its policies. The Jewish minorities who support such a law were mainly found in the hard-core Right and the Orthodox group (Hermann et al., 2017b, p. 173).

The Politicians

An important part of politicians' role in democratic contexts is framing the political arena for the citizens: putting the facts in order and giving them meaning so that the public can follow their reasoning and support their political agendas. In the past, politicians enjoyed much epistemic authority. Their political framings were given much

Table 14.7 Trust in Social Media Compared to Traditional Outlets, by Nationality (%)

Do not have more trust in social media than in traditional media	Ages 18–34	Ages 35–54	Ages 55+
Jews	70	57	80
Arabs	48	57	56

credit, and their impact on their constituencies’ views and sentiments was immediate and strong. This seems to have changed over the past few decades, in Israel as in many other countries. As discussed in this section, at present large segments of the public view politicians as corrupt, self-centered, and unresponsive to the needs and wishes of their constituencies, thus impairing the “sovereignty of the people” principle.

Much as in the case of the media, as Figure 14.6 suggests, trust in politicians and political institutions in Israel is now at a low level.

Apparently the Israeli public’s political trust is so low because the politicians’ image is so negative. For one thing, as the Democracy Index yearly reports show, a constant majority of both Israeli Jews and Arabs disagree with the statement that “nearly all members of Knesset work hard and do what they should do” (see Figure 14.7).

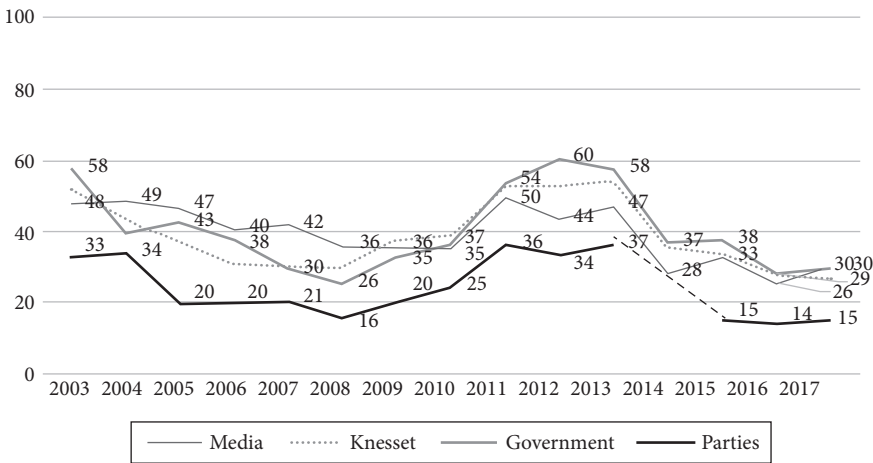


FIGURE 14.6 Trust in the government, the Knesset, the political parties, and the media, 2003–2017 (% That Have Trust, Jews).

Source: Based on annual Israeli Democracy Index reports, 2003–2017.

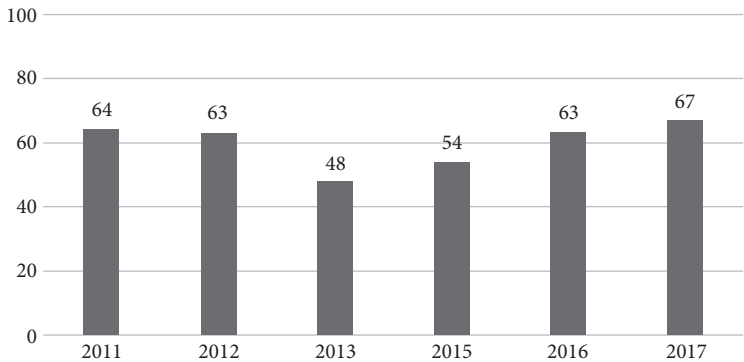


FIGURE 14.7 “Nearly all members of Knesset work hard and do what they should do” (% That Agree, Jews and Arabs, 2011–2017).

Source: Based on annual Israeli Democracy Index reports, 2011–2017.

In addition, a large and stable majority thinks that Israeli politicians are detached from the real needs and wishes of their constituencies. Last but not least, on a corruption scale of 1 = very corrupt to 5 = not corrupt at all, in the last couple of years the Israeli government scored lower than the midpoint in the direction of being very corrupt. Given such a negative image of politicians, it would be unrealistic to expect that they could fulfill their traditional role as prominent public agenda setters and as reliable political-reality interpreters for the Israeli citizenry.

DISCUSSION

In another sarcastic song on the *Waiting for the Messiah* album, “There Is No Controversy,” Hanoch pointed to Israeli society’s tendency to deny that it was torn by deep disputes. Instead it pretended that these were only—in the song’s words—“minor misunderstandings.” This denial has become more prevalent since the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by an Orthodox Jewish, radical right-winger in 1995, after which the main themes of the national discourse were “national unity” and “reaching out to the other [political camp].”

Focusing on the deep cleavages within the Israeli public, this chapter maintains that on many critical issues there are several well-identified and deeply rooted “public opinions” rather than one coherent “public opinion.” As indicated by the empirical data presented in this chapter, the main divisions are between the Israeli Jews and Arabs; the Jewish Right and Left; and the different groups on the religiosity scale, with the secular on one side and the ultra-Orthodox at the other extreme.

A second issue examined here is the overlap among these divisions. This is particularly apparent between the Right–Left and secular–Orthodox scales. In fact, the multicollinearity between them is so strong that often they can replace each other for analytical purposes. This overlap is exemplified in the discussion of two critical issues: the preferred and present-day character of the State of Israel (Jewish? democratic?) and the roots of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and ways to resolve it.²¹

A third, more hypothetical argument concerns the question of who or what shapes Israeli public opinion at present. This chapter has suggested that identity politics, a rather abstract concept, more than traditional agents—the media and the politicians—is responsible for these deep fractures. This assumption calls for a much more probing analysis, but the following tentative argument is proposed here: the negative public image of both the media and the politicians, for which several empirical indications have been presented, most probably undermines both agents’ ability to shape public opinion. A biased media and self-centered, corrupt, and inattentive politicians are not very likely to be regarded as political leading lights by the public, certainly not when group affiliations are so intense and powerful. Both the media and the politicians are aware of their weakness as movers and shakers of public opinion. But instead of taking upon themselves the more difficult mitigating function, they (ab)use the sociodemographic–political nexus as a means of targeting specific audiences while delegitimizing others.

This, in turn, contributes to the deepening of the divisions on the public opinion level and to the further erosion of the already quite thin Israeli national consensus.

NOTES

1. Miri Regev, Israeli minister of culture and sports, from the right-wing Likud Party, is an extreme example of an incumbent officeholder in Israel's current government who repeatedly speaks on behalf of "the people." It should be noted, however, that by this term she refers to the majority who voted for the coalition parties, thereby excluding all others as a minority allegedly not part of the "people" to be served (Boker, 2015).
2. A methodological note: much of the data presented in this article is taken from the survey projects conducted independently by the Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research at the Israel Democracy Institute or jointly with the Evens Program in Mediation and Conflict Resolution at Tel Aviv University.
3. The average turnout in the last two decades is around 66%.
4. In Economist Intelligence Unit (2017), Israel scored 8.89 (on a 0–10 scale) on the political participation scale.
5. According to the CIA, literacy in Israel is 97.8 percent. The World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2103.html#136>. Based on data from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics.
6. President Reuven Rivlin, address to the 15th Annual Herzliya Conference, http://www.president.gov.il/English/ThePresident/Speeches/Pages/news_070615_01.aspx#cont.
7. The Arab minority is composed of a large Muslim majority (85 percent) and two small minority groups, Christian (7 percent) and Druze (7 percent). This is important because the three groups hold similar views on certain issues but very different views on others.
8. For a detailed comparison of the Israeli Arab and Jewish educational, medical, financial, and other social and economic indicators, see Hermann et al. (2017a).
9. For example, a constant majority in the Jewish public is against including Arab parties in the ruling coalition and appointing Arab ministers and is also against Arab representatives participating in national decision-making processes (Hermann et al., 2017a).
10. The survey was based on a representative sample of the population ($N = 1,000$, 500 Jews and 500 Arabs).
11. It should be noted that the Israeli Right–Left juxtaposition is different from the Western one. It mainly refers to the two antithetical positions on security affairs: the Right puts the lion's share of the blame for the ongoing Israeli–Arab/Palestinian conflict on the "other" side and regards its hostility toward Israel and the Jews as immanent. Hence, by and large, this political bloc is reluctant to make territorial and other concessions in return for a peace treaty. In addition, its Orthodox elements believe that the entire Land of Israel is a Jewish patrimony, and therefore it is forbidden to give any part of it to others. The Left bloc, on the other hand, finds fault with both sides as far as responsibility for the ongoing conflict is concerned, sometimes even considers the Israeli side as more responsible for it, and regards Arab enmity as a result of the conflict situation, not inherent. Therefore, the Left is willing to make significant territorial and other concessions, even though they entail certain security risks, based on the assumption that the other side is also interested in peace once the disagreements are resolved and the occupation is ended. The center is

- located between these two blocs. In most cases the centrists are frustrated leftists or sobered-up right-wingers. Given the right security guarantees, this bloc is ready for limited concessions. As discussed later in this chapter, on concrete matters the center's views are sometimes closer to those of the Right and sometimes to those of the Left.
12. It should be noted that similar to many other repeated measurements on political matters, on this question, because of some sampling difficulties or more substantial causes, the Arab distribution of opinion is much more fluctuating than that of the Jewish public.
 13. Central Bureau of Statistics of Israel (2014).
 14. In the Israeli Arab sector, the share of those who define themselves as "nonreligious" is far smaller than among the Jews. See Pew Research Center (2016).
 15. For example, in the 2017 *Democracy Index* Survey 72 percent of the ultra-Orthodox reported a below-average income, compared to 41 percent of the Orthodox, 48 percent of the traditional more religious, 45 percent of the traditional nonreligious, and only 36 percent of the secular (Hermann et al., 2017b).
 16. For the English text of the proclamation, see https://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/megilat_eng.htm.
 17. www.cbs.gov.il/publications11/seker_hevratio9/word/intro_h.doc; and [http://www.justice.gov.il/StateIdentity/InformationInEnglish/Documents/Basic%20Law%20110911%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.justice.gov.il/StateIdentity/InformationInEnglish/Documents/Basic%20Law%20110911%20(1).pdf).
 18. These two questions were open-ended, and the answers were clustered and categorized by the Guttman Center research team.
 19. The one-state solution, which has various nuances, is acceptable to only a small minority in Israel today. See, e.g., the January 2017 Peace Index.
 20. For similar results, see Shikaki & Hermann (2016).
 21. Due to the limited scope of this chapter and the complex nature of the proximity between the views of the Israeli Arabs and the Jewish Left, this issue, along with the intra-Arab differences, has not been touched upon here.

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PART III

ISRAELI
POLITICAL
INSTITUTIONS

CHAPTER 15

THE “CONSTITUTIONAL” SYSTEM OF ISRAEL

GREGORY MAHLER

ISRAEL’S constitutional system exhibits a unique blend of the many sources that influence Israeli political institutions. This chapter examines the Israeli constitutional setting, including Israel’s decision to have an “unwritten” constitution and to write a constitution over time, and describes some of the basic structures of Israel’s constitution and the changing role of the courts in constitutional politics.

The establishment of a written constitution is considered by many to be essential for any modern nation-state. Constitutions have been described as “power maps,” playing an important role in political systems by providing guidelines for permissible and impermissible political behavior (Duchacek, 1973). In addition, a constitution provides a yardstick for judicial review and a set of standards for monitoring legislative or executive actions.

While acknowledging the importance of written constitutions, however, we must recognize that *written constitutions* do not guarantee *constitutional government*. This is an important distinction. A *written constitution* is a document that contains an expression of the fundamental principles of the regime, as well as of the political structures and processes according to which the regime operates. The term *constitutional government*, on the other hand, has a special meaning for students of politics; it is a government of limited power, a regime in which there are policy or behavioral boundaries beyond which the government simply may not go. It is therefore possible to have constitutional governments with formal written constitutions (e.g., the United States and France), constitutional governments without formal written constitutions (e.g., Israel and Britain), unconstitutional governments with formal written constitutions (e.g., the former Soviet Union), and unconstitutional governments without formal written constitutions (e.g., Nigeria after a military coup and Saudi Arabia). The point is that the actual *behavior* of a regime may be more important than the extent to which it has created a set of legal documents.

The political culture that has developed in Israel over the past seven decades has been less concerned with formal structures than have the political cultures of many other nations. Israel has no explicit bill of rights or a specifically created constitution to provide clear and unambiguous guidelines for governmental power. Yet by any measure the Israeli polity is a stable democracy; on more than one occasion elections have taken place that have resulted in a change in leadership—in power flowing from the main/leading political party that had been in power to a different political party that had been in opposition—and the transfer of leadership took place peacefully.

THE DEBATE OVER CREATING A WRITTEN CONSTITUTION

The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 of November 29, 1947, advocating the partition of Palestine into two independent states, one Arab and one Jewish, required the states to adopt written constitutions. The resolution also stipulated several other points:

1. Establishment of a legislature elected by secret ballot and universal suffrage, and an executive responsible to the legislature
2. Settling of international disputes peacefully
3. Acceptance of an obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force
4. Guarantee of equal nondiscriminatory rights in religious, economic, and political areas to all persons, including human rights, freedom of religion, language, speech, education, publication, assembly, and association
5. Preservation of freedom of visitation and transit for residents and citizens of the “other” state in Palestine, “subject to considerations of national security” (United Nations, 1947, pp. 135–138)

In the *Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel*, proclaimed on May 14, 1948, a commitment was undertaken to have an elected constituent assembly meet to adopt a constitution not later than October 1, 1948 (Gutmann, 1998). Because of Israel’s ongoing national war for survival, this commitment was not kept. During this period, however, the Provisional State Council did engage in a number of discussions and appointed a committee to begin work on a written constitution.

In July 1948 the Provisional State Council appointed a committee of eight to serve as a constitutional committee and “to assemble, study, and catalogue pertinent recommendations and material, and to prepare a draft constitution which, together with minority opinions in the committee, shall be submitted to the Constituent Assembly for its consideration” (Zidon, 1967). This committee was not asked to consider whether a constitution *should* be written; its recommendations were based on the premise that the document *would* be written.

On November 18, 1948, the Provisional State Council passed the *Constituent Assembly Elections Ordinance*, calling for the election of a constituent assembly. Two months later the council passed the *Constituent Assembly (Transition) Ordinance*, transferring all of its powers to the Constituent Assembly, which was elected on January 25, 1949; on March 8, 1949, it transformed itself into the first Knesset.

During the three weeks of its existence, during which it sat at the Jewish Agency building in Jerusalem, the Constituent Assembly enacted the *Transition Law* (February 16, 1949). This law included characteristics of a state apparatus, containing chapters on the Knesset, the president, the government, and other provisions. But the assembly never fully debated or adopted a written constitution. The assembly did table a draft constitution, authored by Dr. Leo Kohn, a political adviser to then prime minister David Ben-Gurion, but did not take it up again until it met as the first Knesset.

It is interesting to note that although the new constitution was not yet written, Ben-Gurion had the title of prime minister because of a broad understanding that the Israeli political system was to be generally modeled after the British "Westminster" system. That model, of course, called its chief executive—also unwritten in law—prime minister (Goldfeder, 2013).

Between May and December 1949 the Knesset Committee on Constitution, Law, and Justice devoted eight sessions to the question of a constitution. Among the leading opponents was David Ben-Gurion, who, with other leaders of the Mapai Party, argued that there was no need to rush into a task that clearly needed to be handled with care.

Opponents of a written constitution also looked to England for a precedent, arguing that if the British, with their history of stable democratic government, did not need a written constitution, then perhaps Israel could survive without one, too. On the other hand, supporters of a written constitution retorted that the claimed parallel with the unwritten British constitution was a fallacious one, as Britain was an established democracy with hundreds of years of stable government operation that contributed to "built-in conventional safeguards." They noted that Israel, in their estimation, had "not yet developed sufficiently powerful and respected conventions to safeguard its system. Therefore, it was argued, Israel needed a written constitution" (Birnbaum, 1970, p. 74).

Beyond this, however, Ben-Gurion contended that Israel's population was in such a state of flux, having doubled by 1949 and at the time on the verge of tripling, that writing a constitution might not be a good idea. He suggested that "it was rather 'basic laws' without special status that were needed" (Sager, 1985, p. 36). "At the present time, the population of Israel represents only a small segment of world Jewry. But the aim of the State of Israel is to take in as many Jews as possible from the Diaspora countries. What right has such a State to adopt a constitution which will be binding on millions of men, women, and children yet to settle within its borders?" (Zidon, 1967, p. 291). Consequently, Ben-Gurion declared that "no written constitution [should] be adopted until Israel's population stabilized and the threat of Arab invasion vanished" (Kraines, 1961, p. 29).

Another major stumbling block to a written constitution concerned religious groups in the polity. The question of the degree to which religious principles should be entrenched in an Israeli constitution concerned many of the new citizens. Those referred to as "secularists" advocated that Israel should develop a constitution similar to those of

other Western, liberal states. On the other side, spokesmen for the religious factions claimed that the Bible and its tradition should make up any written constitution; this would be superior to any man-made legislation “since it was of divine origin.” Because it was felt that constitutions were items regarding which consensus should be developed, rather than items to be imposed by majorities upon minorities, it was decided by the Knesset that it would be better to put together, piece by piece, legislation that would eventually form Israel’s constitution (Arian, 1985, p. 179).

On June 13, 1950, the Knesset voted by a fifty to thirty margin to postpone indefinitely the adoption of a formal written constitution and decided instead to allow for its gradual creation, with the individual pieces to be designated “Fundamental Laws,” or “Basic Laws.”¹ The resolution read:

The First Knesset directs the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee to prepare a draft constitution for the State. The Constitution shall be constructed article by article in such a manner that each shall in itself constitute a fundamental law.

Each article shall be brought before the Knesset as the committee completes its work, and all the articles together shall comprise the State Constitution.

(Kraines, 1961, p. 30)

At some point in the future, the Knesset said, the entire body of Basic Laws would be consolidated into a single document to be known as the *Constitution of Israel*. Since the resolution said nothing about the period within which the Basic Laws had to be written, Ben-Gurion and his supporters were in no hurry. Indeed, the first of the Basic Laws was not passed until eight years later (Lahav, 1998).

However, a number of leaders in Israel supported the creation of a written constitution. One argument cited was that Israel *had*, in fact, already committed itself to writing such a document to the United Nations. Further, many saw the Basic Laws as not being the functional equivalent of a constitution because they would be passed by simple majorities of the Knesset and thus could be reversed by the same majorities. They argued instead that a constitution should be a more special and inflexible document than the Basic Laws would be. It should also require more than simple majorities—at least two-thirds or three-fourths of the legislature, for example—to come into existence.

In addition, a number of other arguments were put forward in favor of Israel’s having a written constitution, including

- that a constitution would provide a firm basis for the government of the state, defining rights of the citizens, limiting the powers of authorities, and regulating relations between the branches of the government;
- that because virtually every other country in the world had a constitution, Israel should have one, too;
- that a constitution has both educational and patriotic significance for the country; and
- that a constitution would be a symbol of national unity, which was especially important to Israel when it was welcoming immigrants from all over the world (Zidon, 1967, p. 289).

In the end, the forces advocating inaction prevailed, as might have been predicted.

Since the resolution of June 13, 1950, the Knesset has passed a number of Basic Laws, but it has yet to complete its work and formally consolidate all of the Basic Laws into a single document. Some legal scholars have questioned the legitimacy of the Basic Laws because, unlike the first Knesset (which did not pass any Basic Laws), the second and subsequent Knessot² did not have the same authority to enact “superior law” that was given to the first Knesset by the Constituent Assembly. Technically, these critics say, the more modern Basic Laws cannot be considered constitutional. Others respond that since the powers of one democratically elected legislature are passed to the next democratically elected legislature, all Knessot have had constitution-making legitimacy (Gavison, 2007; Klein, 1971, p. 382). After seven decades of debate, it seems safe to say that no formal consensus has been reached, although practice has indicated that the Knesset would have the power to act should it choose to do so.

Joshua Segev noted in 2007 that Israel has followed a “non-decision constitution-making tactic” over the years, and that this tactic has been functional for Israeli society. He argued:

People in Israel disagree. They disagreed in the past; they have disagreed about the past. They disagree about the future; they will probably disagree in the future.... Disagreements and disputes prevent Israel from acknowledging and making real and substantial progress in constitution-making... however... one should not shed tears over Israel's lack of a formal constitution. The constitutional tactic chosen by Israel's founding fathers was the “decision not to decide,” which fulfilled the goals and needs that impel nations toward formal constitution-making in the first place. (Segev, 2007)

Israel is still one of a minority of democratic states in the world (alongside other established democracies such as Great Britain and New Zealand) without a formal, written constitution. Periodically, Israeli political leaders call for the establishment of a formal constitution, despite the ongoing lack of consensus on constitutional details.

OTHER RECENT ATTEMPTS TO WRITE A CONSTITUTION: “INSIDE” AND “OUTSIDE” EFFORTS

In recent years a joint project of the Knesset and the Jewish Agency for Israel has invested much time and energy in the study of a new constitution for Israel. In May 2003 the Knesset's Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee started an initiative called the *Constitution by Broad Consensus Project*, which had as a goal writing a formal constitution. In February 2006 the committee presented a draft for a full constitution. While

this effort did not succeed, it did heighten public interest in the topic and may have some implications for future initiatives (Knesset, 2017).

The Knesset has not been the only locus of action related to desires on the part of many Israelis for a completed constitution. Examples of such initiatives are a document authored by two leading scholars of an Israeli constitution and the continuous work of the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI).

The *Gavison–Medan Covenant* was a document created by Professor Ruth Gavison and Rabbi Yaacov Medan, a report on which was published in 2004, dealing with some of the fundamental challenges facing Israeli society, especially focusing on matters of religion and the state, including the Law of Return, citizenship and conversion, marriage and divorce, the Sabbath, and the role of religious councils. Although this document was not a draft constitution *per se*, it did address in over three hundred pages some of the most fundamental constitutional challenges facing the State of Israel (Gavison–Medan Covenant, n.d.).

The IDI has long been a leader in initiating conversations among Israeli scholars and the public dealing with important topics in Israeli government and politics. Through the publication of such volumes as *Israel: Toward a Constitutional Democracy* (2001), *The Basic Laws as a Foundation for a Constitution* (2002), and *Rights, Constitution, and Consensus in a Jewish and Democratic State* (2005), the IDI has kept discussion of a written constitution and constitutionalism before the public. In 2007 the IDI published *Constitution by Consensus: Draft Proposal*, edited by Supreme Court chief justice emeritus Meir Shamgar (Israel Democracy Institute, n.d.). Although this draft proposal was not approved, it did serve to help focus discussion that was taking place and has become for many a key structure in discussions about the constitution taking place in the Knesset.

THE STRUCTURES OF THE ISRAELI CONSTITUTION

A well-known scholar of Israeli politics has written that it is not clear whether the classification “Basic Law” includes “only such legislation as has formally received that designation, or whether it may be used to define any law dealing with constitutional matters” (Zidon, 1967, p. 297; see also Sapir, Barak-Erez, & Barak, 2013). Basic Laws, except for their unusual titles, do not always have specific features distinguishing them from other acts of the Knesset. As another analyst has noted:

Since the resolution of 1950 did not define the term “Fundamental Law,” many considered it to apply to all laws of fundamental constitutional content passed by the Knesset, like, for example, the Law of the Return (1950), which provides that every Jew has the right to immigrate to Israel, or the Nationality Law (1952)... At one point Knesset Chairman Kadish Luz cited twenty-two “laws of a constitutional

nature” in addition to the two formal Fundamental Laws then on the statute books, and asserted that the task laid down in the 1950 resolution had already been largely accomplished. (Sager, 1985, p. 40)

With only a few exceptions, Basic Laws can be changed at any time by a simple majority of the Knesset. One example of these exceptions can be found in *Basic Law: The Knesset*, which has clauses that can only be amended by absolute Knesset majorities (61 votes out of 120), and another clause that would require a two-thirds vote to amend, regardless of the number of members present. Sections of the Basic Laws *the Judiciary*, *Freedom of Occupation*, and *Human Dignity and Liberty* also make their structure and powers immune from emergency regulations.

Thus far, thirteen chapters of an Israeli constitution have been written, each of which is called a Basic Law. These laws are acts of the Knesset; some have been passed by a regular majority (a majority of those present and voting), not an absolute majority. The thirteen Basic Laws that have been passed by the Knesset are (1) *The Knesset* (1958, updated in 1987); (2) *Israel Lands* (1960); (3) *The President of the State* (1964); (4) *The Government* (1968, amended in 1992 and 2001); (5) *The State Economy* (1975); (6) *The Army* (1976); (7) *Jerusalem: Capital of Israel* (1980); (8) *The Judiciary* (1984); (9) *The State Comptroller* (1988); (10) *Human Dignity and Liberty* (1992); (11) *Freedom of Occupation* (1992); (12) *Referendum* (2014); and (13) *Israel—The Nation State of the Jewish People* (2018) (Knesset, 2020; Greenfield, 2014).

In 1992 the same frustration with the political process which led to the drastic revision of the *Basic Law: The Government* [see chapter by Kenig on the executive branch, in this volume] also provided the momentum for the Knesset to enact two additional Basic Laws, which, for the first time, dealt with human rights. The logjam was broken because advocates of a written constitution realized that even if it was still impossible to enact a general Bill of Rights, it was possible to enact bills which dealt with the less controversial human rights. In short, Israel’s step-by-step process to constitution-making was employed in the area of human rights. The Knesset enacted the *Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation* and the *Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty*. This time, however, the Supreme Court utilized the language of the two new Basic Laws to proclaim a constitutional revolution. (Edelman, 2000, p. 15)

In 1995, in *United Mizrahi Bank PLC v. Migdal Cooperative Village*, the Supreme Court established the supremacy of Basic Laws over ordinary laws. It also ruled that the Basic Laws provide the court with expanded powers of judicial review. That is, by announcing that the Basic Laws would serve as the nation’s written constitution, the court could now refer to them when it exercised an American-style power of judicial review.

In addition to Basic Laws, other pieces of legislation have been passed by the Knesset over the years that have taken on what might be called a *quasi-constitutional* status in terms of both their legal importance and their contribution to the country’s political culture. Among these are the *Law and Administration Ordinance* (1948), which

established a massive body of Ottoman and British law as Israeli law; the *Law of Return* (1950), which laid out the fundamental principles of the rights of Jews to immigrate to Israel and the responsibilities of the state to help them in this effort; the *Equal Rights for Women Law* (1951), giving women equal political and legal rights in the state; the *Nationality Law* (1952), which regulated the naturalization of non-Jews; the *Judges' Law* (1953), setting up a framework for the appointment of judges; and the *Courts Law* (1969), which established several different systems of courts for different classes of litigation.

The first of the Basic Laws to be passed, *Basic Law: The Knesset*, dealt with the relations between the branches of government. The Knesset was entrusted with electing the head of state, the president, for a five-year term. The president is responsible only to the Knesset, and it alone has the power to remove the president from office for misconduct or incapacity. Although the president has a legal obligation to sign legislation from the Knesset, he has no veto power, nor can he refuse to sign a legislative act.³ The president also plays a role in the formation of the government. According to *Basic Law: The Government*, it is the job of the president to “entrust to one of the Members of the Knesset the duty of forming a Government.” Before this Basic Law was passed, there was much debate in Israel over whether the prime minister had to be a member of Knesset (MK); since 1968 the question has been moot. This was amended in the *Basic Law: The Government*.

In fact, *Basic Law: The Government* has been changed several times. Originally passed in 1968, it was amended starting in 1996 to establish the direct election of the prime minister and was amended again to *repeal* the direct election of the prime minister, ending in 2001. The newest revision of this Basic Law was passed in March 2001 by the fifteenth Knesset. It lays down rules for the selection of a prime minister and cabinet following an election or following the failure of an earlier government, describing the role of the president in the process and the nature of the coalition formation process (Hazan, 2005).

The presidency itself was first created in the February 1949 *Transition Law* and was more fully developed in *Basic Law: The President of the State* (1964). The intention was to model it after the British head of state role, but in a republican rather than monarchical form of government. Chaim Weizmann, the first president of Israel, advocated an American-style “strong” presidency. His conception of the office lost out to that of David Ben-Gurion, who advocated a “weak” head of state and a “strong” prime minister, following the British model. The following anecdote illustrates the result. In 1951 the visiting American secretary of labor passed on a message from President Harry S. Truman to President Weizmann expressing Truman’s disappointment that Weizmann “had not taken a stronger position concerning the protection of Arab refugees. ‘I am only a constitutional President,’ replied Dr. Weizmann, ‘and it’s outside my province. My handkerchief is the only thing I can stick my nose into. Into everything else—it’s Ben-Gurion’s nose’” (Kraines, 1961, pp. 124–125).

When Egypt’s president Anwar Sadat undertook his extraordinarily courageous trip to Jerusalem in quest of Middle East peace in November 1977, after his arrival at Ben-Gurion Airport he traveled to Jerusalem in a limousine with the president of Israel,

Yitzhak Navon, not with the prime minister of Israel, Menachem Begin, because Navon was the president, the head of state, and diplomatic protocol required the president of Egypt to be hosted by the president of Israel. Sadat negotiated, however, with Begin, the prime minister and chief executive of the government.

The role of the Israeli president today is a symbolic one. Originally the president was elected by a Knesset majority to a five-year term of office and could be re-elected after that. That provision was changed in 1998 to a single term of seven years. His (thus far all Israeli presidents have been men, although some women have sought the position) powers are clearly limited by *Basic Law: The President of the State* and other laws. These powers include the responsibility to make a number of appointments, although these appointments are made “on the advice” of the government. (In other words, the prime minister tells him whom he should appoint.) He accepts the credentials of foreign diplomats and signs treaties negotiated with foreign countries. He also performs a large number of public relations activities, including hosting groups, making speeches, and the like.

When Ehud Barak became prime minister of Israel in 1999, many felt that the time had arrived for Israel to finish the constitution-building process and “entrench” a constitution. This was because Barak had enough support in the Knesset to pass necessary legislation without the support of *any* religious parties, and Barak himself supported finishing the process. It was recognized, however, that even pulling together already completed pieces of legislation would be a difficult and symbolically important process, which could not be rushed through the Knesset with the appearance of forcing it upon the Israeli public.

Unfortunately other political events resulted in Barak resigning as prime minister in late 2000 and participating in an early election for another term as prime minister, which he lost to Ariel Sharon. With that loss the issue of constitutional completion was relegated to the back-burner of the Israeli political agenda.

THE ROLE OF THE COURTS IN THE CREATION OF A CONSTITUTION

In the absence of a written constitution, until 1995 the Supreme Court of Israel often had no concrete source of law higher than acts of the Knesset upon which to base its decisions (see chapter by Hofnung & Wattad on the judicial branch, in this volume). This means that when the court has handed down decisions, it has often done so with what is to some questionable legitimacy. The real reason for this may have more to do with politics than with principle (Navot, 2014).

The Mapai Party, which dominated Israel’s early years (see the chapter by Hazan on the parties and the party system, in this volume), offered one rationale in opposition to the establishment of a written constitution: a written constitution would lead to an

activist court and the development of American-style judicial review. A written constitution would be a known standard against which to measure legislation and public policy and would encourage courts to be active in such measurement. If there were no such standard, courts might be more hesitant to step into the political arena (Mehozay, 2016).

The importance of the principle of legislative supremacy—that the Knesset was the ultimate source of constitutional dogma—had several implications for the role of the Supreme Court. First, the jurisdiction of the court was limited by the Knesset; the court was not in a position to limit the jurisdiction of the Knesset. Second, when the court chose to adjudicate, its decisions were based on the principle of legislative sovereignty. Only rarely did it question Knesset legislation, and never did it question the ability of a majority of the Knesset to do anything it wanted. Third, because of the principle of legislative supremacy, the court could not “say what the law is,” which it argued was the role of the Knesset (Bin-Nun, 1980, p. 569).

Thus, until 1995 the absence of a formal, written constitution, combined with the principle of legislative supremacy, resulted in a court with strictly limited abilities to shape the constitution of the nation. On those occasions when the court was willing to become more active, its rulings were limited and politically very cautious. As a group, the court expressed the belief that its function was to uphold the law, rather than to make it (Doron, Naor, & Meydani, 2013).

In a number of very significant cases, the Supreme Court moved from a position of inaction to a position of highly significant action with respect to review of Knesset legislation. *Jabotinsky v. Weizmann* (1951) was the first decision in which the term *justiciability* was used by the court. The case concerned the mechanics of forming a new government. In rendering its verdict the court ruled that the entire question was “political” and therefore “nonjusticiable”:

The whole subject of the duty of forming a Government...is nonjusticiable and beyond the scope of judicial determination. The relationships involved are in their very nature outside the field of judicial enquiry; they are relationships between the President of the State, the Government and the Knesset, that is to say the executive and parliamentary authorities.... The remedy must be found through parliamentary means... in the reaction of the Knesset to [the] Government.

(Witkon, 1966, p. 45)

A later case, *Basul v. the Minister of Interior* (HCJ 188/63, 1965), held the line of judicial inaction regarding Knesset legislation:

I doubt whether we [the Court] have the power to deny the validity of a law duly passed by the Knesset.... In other words, it is doubtful whether a Court can look beyond the law and examine its correctness or compliance with the facts.... The Knesset is the legislative authority in the State and, as such, is sovereign.

(Witkon, 1966, p. 54)

Probably the most famous decision by the Supreme Court of Israel—comparable to the *Marbury v. Madison* decision (1803) by the Supreme Court of the United States, which established the principle of judicial review in the United States—was issued in *Bergman v. the Minister of Interior* (1969). The plaintiff, Dr. Aaron Bergman, had brought suit before the court seeking to prevent the minister of finance from acting under a provision of the *Financing Law* of 1969 that provided for governmental financing of political parties in election campaigns. Dr. Bergman claimed that the *Financing Law* discriminated against new political parties because it provided governmental financing only for those parties that *already* had seats in the (outgoing) Knesset. Bergman argued that such an inequality required the court to invalidate the *Financing Law* by reason of section 4 of *Basic Law: The Knesset*, which provides: “The Knesset shall be elected by general, national, direct...equal elections in accordance with the Knesset elections laws. This section shall not be varied save by a majority of the members of the Knesset” (Zemach, 1976, p. 58).

The court’s decision established the principle of judicial review, but like the *Marbury* decision, it did so in a way that was politically acceptable at the time. Justice Moshe Landau, speaking on behalf of the court, declared an act of the Knesset void for the first time in modern Israeli history. The court sided with Bergman and ruled that the *Financing Law* was “incompatible with the equality in Section Four of the *Basic Law*: a Knesset elected under the *Financing Law* would not by terms of the Law be elected in an equal election” (Nimmer, 1970, p. 1221). The court went even further and provided the legislature with detailed advice about how it should repair the inequality in the *Financing Law*, advising the Knesset that it could either re-enact it with a special majority to essentially override the Basic Law, or it could be amended “so as to remove the lack of equality” by providing support for new political parties. (Zemach, 1976, p. 60).

The *Bergman* case was the foundation upon which the modern Supreme Court of Israel has based its increasingly active role in recent years, and as a result tensions between the Knesset and the court have increased and decreased over time. The problem has been that some MKs have threatened the Supreme Court with legislative retaliation—to legislatively strip the court of some of its powers—if it became too active (Mautner, 2011).

This issue of the wisdom of giving the Knesset the power to overturn decisions of the Supreme Court continues to receive attention. A government-appointed public committee proposed *Basic Law: Legislation* in 2017, to establish the power of the Supreme Court to annul legislation of the Knesset, but also give the Knesset the power to pass the law *again*, even after the court’s annulment. The proposed Basic Law has not yet been approved, but critics of the Supreme Court have continued to argue for it; such a law would “stop the conflicts between the legislative and judicial branches of government” (Harkov & Paraszczuk, 2012, p. 4).

A key event in the changing role of the court was the passage in 1992 of two pieces of legislation, the *Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation* and the *Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty*. They limited the Knesset’s authority to pass legislation violating specified

rights and turned out to be significant bases for the court to use for increasing its role in shaping social policy.

One of the court's most activist members, former chief justice Aharon Barak, has argued, "Everyone agrees that in a constitutional government that recognizes judicial review of the constitutionality of a statute, the final decision about the fundamental values is in the hands of the court" (Jacobsohn, 1993, p. 156; Barak, 2006) Although Barak declared that there was a "constitutional revolution" in terms of the power of the court to exercise judicial review, the court has not exercised that power very frequently.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the discussion of the proper role of the court was still actively being pursued in Israel. One of the major groups of critics of the court has been the Orthodox religious parties, which have resented decisions by the court limiting their ability to determine what, precisely, "Jewishness" means in Israel, and what the implications of religious orthodoxy might be (Ben-Porat, 2012; Petty, 2014). In 1999 the United Torah Judaism (Yahdut HaTorah) and Shas Parties pushed a resolution through the Knesset just before a weekend (when, apparently, "most coalition members had already gone home for the weekend") that "called on the Supreme Court to refrain from interfering in *halachic* [religious] and political issues, the legislative process, and the religious-secular status quo" (Gilbert, 1999, p. 4):

The main opposition to the adoption of a constitution still resides with the religious parties. They are opposed ideologically because they think a temporal constitution would undermine their claim that the Bible itself (and its millennia-old rabbinical interpretations) is the only fundamental law the Jewish state needs. Politically, they continue to fear the abolition of religious legislation that provides the underpinning for their political clout. (Goell & Jager, 2002, p. 13)

Shortly after the 1999 action, the Knesset passed a resolution rescinding the critical resolution and expressing support for judicial review and the court:

The Knesset last night declared support for judicial review of its legislation by the Supreme Court, in a resolution that rescinded an anti-Court statement passed last month. The resolution was passed at the end of a re-debate on relations between the Knesset and the judiciary. Coalition whip Ophir Pines-Paz, who initiated the debate, said the Knesset had "saved its honor" by passing the new resolution. . . . It states that the Knesset must strengthen the independent status of the judiciary and "recognizes the democratic need for judicial review over its legislation," in the framework of its authority emanating from Basic Laws. (Gilbert, 1999, p. 4)

In November 2000 legislation was introduced in the Knesset to create a new Constitutional Court that would formally exercise the powers of judicial review that the Supreme Court of Israel had been developing. The new Constitutional Court would have eleven members and would be made up of three justices from the Supreme Court, two religious court judges, one *kadi* (a judge ruling in accordance with Islamic religious

law), four professors, and a new immigrant; the proposal died, but it did demonstrate the degree to which some MKs were unhappy with the court.

An article on Israeli “hybrid constitutionalism” published in 2012 suggested that while Israel had experienced a “constitutional revolution” in the 1990s, there continues to be an “ongoing vehement debate” in Israel over the existence of a formal Israeli constitution, “including the question of whether a constitution is even desirable.” The article suggests that rather than debate the *existence* (or nonexistence) of a constitution, Israelis should be discussing the *type* of formal constitution Israel is developing. “The either/or approach—influenced by U.S. *Marbury* rhetoric, which established the foundations for the exercise of judicial review over primary legislation in the United States—is not compatible with Israel’s historical, political, and societal conditions” (Weill, 2012, pp. 351–352). This is a debate that will clearly continue in coming years.

The role of the Supreme Court, then, in the creation of the Israeli constitution has evolved over the years. In Israel’s earliest years, the court was very hesitant to intervene and was content to declare conflicts to be political and leave them to the political arena, primarily the Knesset, for resolution. The court was consistent in ruling that the will of a simple majority of the sitting Knesset was sovereign, save in those instances in which a Basic Law had explicitly required special majorities for legislation designed to amend the doctrines of the Basic Law. In more recent years the court has been willing to take a more visible, more political, and more proactive role, and the body of what has been called constitutional law in Israel has grown more rapidly. This continues, and often includes Israeli society’s most controversial and pressing concerns, issues that cannot be addressed in the legislative arena, such as those arising from military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (until the withdrawal from the latter in 2005).

CONCLUSION

Over seven decades ago Israel committed itself to writing a constitution, and it has been intermittently working on fulfilling that commitment since that time. While it can be argued that Israel has faced some challenges in achieving constitutional consensus that do not face most states—including a protracted, existential state of war with many of its neighbors, active and intense social and religious cleavages in the population, and the challenge of massive immigration—the fact is that Israel has not yet honored its commitment to create a formal written constitution.

This chapter shows that there was a substantial debate during Israel’s early years about creating a written constitution, one that wasn’t really resolved in a definitive way, leading to what one author has called a “decision not to decide.” Over the years a variety of attempts have been made to write a constitution, both what we have called here “inside” efforts and “outside” efforts, but thus far none has succeeded.

The structures of the current status of Israel's constitution—the thirteen Basic Laws and continued Knesset discussion, combined with some level of judicial review by the Supreme Court—have left Israel without a formal, written constitution and with conflicting claims of legislative supremacy and judicial review. This has led to continued discussion of Israeli “hybrid constitutionalism” and dispute in Israel about what should be done to resolve the constitutional debate there, if it is going to be resolved.

As the IDI has noted, “Now, more than ever, Israel needs a constitution to stabilize its political system, define the relationship between the three branches of government, and guarantee basic human rights in a diverse and threatened society” (Israel Democracy Institute, n.d.). The challenge of needing a written constitution is still being resolved today, as are the issues of the role of the Supreme Court of Israel and of the very nature of what makes up constitutionalism in Israel. The effects of these challenges are observed again and again in the pages of this volume.

NOTES

1. Both terms can be found in use. This volume uses “Basic Laws,” which is commonly used in the literature.
2. The plural of Knesset is Knessot.
3. *Basic Law: The President of the State* indicates that “the President of the State *shall* sign every Law,” not that he *may* sign laws passed by the Knesset Section 11 [a] [1]). The interpretation of this has been that the president has no choice but to sign all legislation that reaches his desk, and thus far no president has tested this assumption.

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CHAPTER 16

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH IN ISRAEL

OFER KENIG

THE terms “executive branch,” “executive,” “government,” and “cabinet” are often used interchangeably, but their meanings tend to differ from one polity to the other. In its broadest meaning, the executive branch in modern democracies consists of a wide variety of institutions and structures, including presidents, prime ministers, cabinets, operating agencies, regulatory commissions, administrative subdivisions (e.g., local government), advisory bodies, and more. In this chapter I refer to the executive in its narrower meaning, focusing on cabinets, prime ministers, and ministers.

The state of Israel was founded as a parliamentary democracy and has retained this institutional feature, save for a seven-year period (1996–2003) when it experimented with a hybrid system of government under which the prime minister was directly elected. As in other parliamentary democracies, the government is dependent on the confidence of parliament, while the roles of the ceremonial head of state (president) and head of government (prime minister) are filled by two different persons. As a country with a diverse society, divided by multidimensional political issues and using a very permissive proportional representation electoral system, it is hardly surprising that Israel has a multiparty system with a highly fragmented parliament (see the chapter by Shugart on the electoral system and the chapter by Friedberg & Hazan on the legislative branch in this volume). This setting produces the central institutional feature under which the executive branch operates: coalition politics.

The chapter starts by outlining the government formation process, pointing to the legal framework and the informal rules that shape it. The second section analyzes the types of coalitions that can be found in Israel. The chapter then turns to an overview of the position of the Israeli prime minister. Described as one of the busiest chief executives in the world, the Israeli prime minister is the central political actor but is often frustrated by many constraints vis-à-vis other actors. The chapter then describes the work and structure of cabinets, focusing on ministers and the ministries. The next section

explains how governments end their political lives. It demonstrates that governments seldom complete a full term and discusses the various circumstances of government termination. This leads to the final section, which assesses common claims about instability and nongovernability.

PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNMENT FORMATION

Israel is a good example of the parliamentary model of democracy in the sense that its governments emerge out of the parliament, are dependent on its confidence, and are the focus of political power. Except for a brief period (discussed later in the chapter), governments and prime ministers are not directly elected by the people. Rather, in the general elections the citizens elect the 120 Members of the Knesset (MKs), and they in turn appoint the government by a formal vote of investiture.

The combination in Israel of a diverse society, multidimensional political issues, and a permissive electoral system produces a highly fragmented parliament (Lijphart, Bowman, & Hazan, 2000). The “effective” number of parliamentary parties has ranged from 3.13 to 8.69, with an average of about 5.4. Israel’s electoral history never saw a single party gain an overall majority of Knesset seats, and therefore election results do not offer a clear answer about who will be the prime minister, let alone what government he or she will head. Hence, the formal rules under which government is formed play an important part in that process.

The complex process of government formation is laid down in the Basic Law: The Government and includes several stages.¹ First, following consultations with the representatives of the parties in parliament, the president of the state nominates one of the leaders of the parties in parliament to form a government. The law is silent with regard to the president’s calculations, thus affording him broad discretion. Typically, the president appoints the leader of the largest party, but this is by no means mandatory, and the critical criterion is who seems to have the best prospect of forming a stable coalition. For example, following the 2009 elections President Shimon Peres appointed Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader of the second-largest party (Likud, twenty-seven seats), to form a government, rather than the leader of the largest party, Tzipi Livni (Kadima, twenty-eight seats).

In the second stage, the nominated MK opens simultaneous coalition negotiations in an attempt to reach an agreement among several parties to support the government. The law stipulates a twenty-eight-day period to complete this task, a time frame that may be extended by the president for fourteen additional days. In the end a coalition agreement is signed between the prime minister’s party and its partners. The coalition agreement and its supplementary document detail the common program of the prospective government and its rules of procedure. Perhaps more important, they lay down the alloca-

tion of “goods” (political positions such as ministers, deputy ministers, and chairs of parliamentary committees) and budgets.²

In the third and final stage, the prospective prime minister presents his government to the Knesset, outlines its goals, and names the cabinet ministers. Following this address, the new government is put to a formal vote of investiture. Although the law does not specify that the procedure must be carried by a majority of votes, this is the convention. The formal investiture vote, which the new government must win, makes Israel a member in the family of countries that practice positive parliamentarism (Bergman, 1993).

In case the nominated MK fails to form a government, the president assigns the formation of government to another MK, who has twenty-eight days for completing the task. If the second nominee also fails at forming a government, and no other candidate is supported by a majority of MKs within twenty-one days, then the parliament is dissolved and new elections are called. Until the political crisis of 2019–2020 (see the next paragraph), only twice has the MK who was nominated to form a government failed to do so, and in both cases this was not following Knesset elections but rather after the collapse of the government in the course of the legislative term. The first occurrence was in 1990, after Yitzhak Shamir’s government was defeated in a vote of no confidence. Shimon Peres was nominated to form a new government but failed to secure the votes needed. The second case was in 2008, when following the resignation of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert—which by law means the collapse of the entire government—the president nominated Tzipi Livni (who replaced Olmert as leader of Kadima) to form a new government, but she did not succeed in doing so. In the first case a second MK (Shamir) succeeded in forming a government, and in the second case early elections were called.

The political crisis of 2019–2020 set several precedents regarding the government formation process. Following the April 2019 elections, after the failing of Benjamin Netanyahu to form a government, the Knesset halted the process by dissolving itself. By doing so it prevented the president from appointing another MK to try and form a government. This was the first time a government was not formed following elections. The government formation that followed the September 2019 elections again failed to produce a government, but this time the process went through all its phases: a first nominee (Netanyahu), a second nominee (Benny Gantz), and then the twenty-one-day period that ended in automatic dissolution of the Knesset. Only after the March 2020 elections was a government finally formed.

The process of government formation was different from 1996 to 2003, when Israel experimented with a type of hybrid regime that combined presidential and parliamentary elements (Hazan, 1996). Under this system, commonly referred to as the “direct election law,” the prime minister was directly elected by the voters. Thus, following elections the elected prime minister immediately commenced forming a government, and the president played no part in the process. However, the elected prime minister still had to gain the confidence of parliament. The system created a “balance of terror” between

the Knesset and the prime minister, as each could dismiss the other (Arian, 2005; Hazan, 1996). The system was eventually abolished because it had failed to achieve its goal of improving stability by reducing the small parties and strengthening the large parties. In fact, the system encouraged vote-splitting and created a highly fragmented Knesset (Kenig, Rahat, & Hazan, 2005).

COALITION TYPES

In parliamentary democracies with multiparty systems, the ruling coalition forms the link between the legislative and the executive branches and also links electoral politics—the arena in which voters exert influence via their votes—with governmental-bureaucratic politics, in which the public's influence is indirect (Galnoor & Blander, 2018). Since no party has ever won an overall Knesset majority, all thirty-five Israeli governments—after and between the twenty-three elections held—were based on a coalition of parties.³ The number of parties included in the ruling coalitions ranged from three to ten.

Obviously there are concessions involved in forming a formal coalition of several parties; ideological differences must be settled and political positions have to be allocated among the coalition members. Thus, as a rule of thumb the prime minister and his party are expected to try to keep costs down by forming a coalition that would give them the smallest necessary majority, known as a “minimal winning coalition.” In the Israeli case, we would therefore expect to find coalitions based on the support of only a few more than sixty-one MKs.

However, the Israeli experience deviates from this expectation, and in fact minimal winning coalitions are rather rare. Most governments are oversized (surplus) coalitions, supported by comfortable majorities (see Table 16.1). Israeli coalitions are based on an average support of about seventy-five MKs.⁴ One explanation for this deviation involves the principle of inclusiveness, which was dominant in the pre-state period and in the early years of Israel. According to this principle, the political leadership aspired to include many parties and movements in government as part of consociational politics and in an effort to prevent parties from boycotting the new political system (Galnoor, 1982). Later, after multiple crises led junior partners to leave the coalition and destabilize the government, prime ministers learned to prefer broad coalitions. Such oversized coalitions reduced the blackmail potential of the smaller coalition partners, gave the prime ministers more leeway in action, and granted them a kind of political insurance policy in the face of coalition crises.

Even in the few cases in which minimal winning coalitions were formed, the prime minister sought a way to solidify his government by courting other parties to join in. For example, Menachem Begin's first government (1977) started its term with a coalition of sixty-two MKs but was broadened four months later to seventy-seven MKs. Benjamin Netanyahu's fourth government (2015) took office with a minimal winning coalition of sixty-one MKs but was broadened a year later to sixty-six MKs.

Table 16.1 Features of Israeli Cabinets

Number	Cabinet	Date in	Date out	Years in Office	Size of Coalition (Number of MKs)*	Number of Ministers*
1	Ben Gurion I	10.3.1949	1.11.1950	1.6	73	12
2	Ben Gurion II	1.11.1950	8.10.1951	0.9	73	13
3	Ben Gurion III	8.10.1951	24.12.1952	1.2	65	13
4	Ben Gurion IV	24.12.1952	26.1.1954	1.1	89	16
5	Sharett I	26.1.1954	29.6.1955	1.4	91	16
6	Sharett II	29.6.1955	3.11.1955	0.3	68	12
7	Ben Gurion V	3.11.1955	7.1.1958	2.2	80	16
8	Ben Gurion VI	7.1.1958	17.12.1959	1.9	80	16
9	Ben Gurion VII	17.12.1959	2.11.1961	1.9	86	16
10	Ben Gurion VIII	2.11.1961	26.6.1963	1.6	68	16
11	Eshkol I	26.6.1963	22.12.1964	1.5	68	15
12	Eshkol II	22.12.1964	12.1.1966	1.1	67	16
13	Eshkol III	12.1.1966	17.3.1969	3.2	75	18
14	Meir I	17.3.1969	15.12.1969	0.7	107	22
15	Meir II	15.12.1969	10.3.1974	4.2	102	24
16	Meir III	10.3.1974	3.6.1974	0.2	68	22
17	Rabin I	3.6.1974	20.6.1977	3.0	61	19
18	Begin I	20.6.1977	5.8.1981	4.1	62	13
19	Begin II	5.8.1981	10.10.1983	2.2	61	18
20	Shamir I	10.10.1983	13.9.1984	0.9	62	20
21	Peres I	13.9.1984	20.10.1986	2.1	97	25
22	Shamir II	20.10.1986	22.12.1988	2.2	96	24
23	Shamir III	22.12.1988	11.6.1990	1.5	97	26
24	Shamir IV	11.6.1990	13.7.1992	2.1	62	19
25	Rabin II	13.7.1992	22.11.1995	3.4	62	17
26	Peres II	22.11.1995	18.6.1996	0.6	59	21
27	Netanyahu I	18.6.1996	6.7.1999	3.0	66	18
28	Barak	6.7.1999	7.3.2001	1.7	75	23
29	Sharon I	7.3.2001	28.2.2003	2.0	80	26
30	Sharon II	28.2.2003	4.5.2006	3.1	68	23
31	Olmert	4.5.2006	31.3.2009	2.9	67	24
32	Netanyahu II	31.3.2009	18.3.2013	4.0	74	30
33	Netanyahu III	18.3.2013	14.5.2015	2.2	68	22
34	Netanyahu IV	14.5.2015	17.5.2020	5.0	61	21
35	Netanyahu V/ Gantz	17.5.2020			73	34

* The size of coalition and the number of ministers refer to the beginning of each cabinet term, thirty days from the formal vote of investiture.

The Israeli governments seldom start their terms as minority coalitions.⁵ In a few cases governments lost their parliamentary majority during their terms, but under these circumstances they found it difficult to function and did not last long. In contrast, several of the coalitions were extremely large. These so-called national unity governments

(grand coalitions) included the two largest parties plus several others. For example, on the eve of the Six-Day War (June 1967), two parties joined the ruling coalition, expanding its base of support to a record high of nearly 110 MKs. Following the virtual tie in the results of the 1984 general elections, another unity government was formed, based on the support of 97 MKs. This government is remembered for its unique feature of rotating the post of prime minister. The coalition agreement stated that Shimon Peres (Labor) would hold the position, while Yitzhak Shamir (Likud) would be the minister of foreign affairs. Then, when the government reached its midpoint, the two would switch positions. Another unique government was formed in May 2020, ending a thirteen-month political deadlock. The coalition agreement that established the Netanyahu–Gantz government (based on the support of a 73-member coalition) created the position of alternate prime minister. It supposedly ensured, by amending the Basic Law, that Gantz would automatically replace Netanyahu as prime minister eighteen months after the government took office. This bizarre arrangement was the result of deep mutual distrust between the two and also addressed Netanyahu’s legal situation by allowing him to remain in the cabinet while conducting his trial.

The tendency to form oversized coalitions and since the 1990s, the weakening of the large mainstream parties (Kenig & Tuttnauer, 2017), have resulted in a rather unique feature in Israeli coalition politics: prime minister’s parties that are in a minority within the coalition. Since 1992 only two parties of the prime minister have enjoyed majority status in the coalition (see Figure 16.1). This factor constrains and often frustrates prime ministers’ efforts to pursue policies.

An additional coalition-building theory looks at ideology and tries to predict what coalition will emerge by considering the parties’ views and ideological positions. According to this approach, we would not expect to see open (noncontinuous) coalitions, or in other words, there will be a tendency to create a “closed” coalition, even if the additional party or parties are not essential for a parliamentary majority. Again, the Israeli experience often deviates from this expectation, and it is not rare to see open coalitions. This may be explained by the features of the Israeli party system, in which the ideological continuum is complex and determining the exact locations of the various parties is challenging (see the chapter by Hazan on the parties and the party system in this volume).

THE PRIME MINISTER

Between 1948 and 2020 twelve individuals (eleven males and a single female; see Table 16.2) have served as prime ministers. Seven of the first eight were immigrants, typical of a new country built on immigration. The last four (Netanyahu, Barak, Sharon, and Olmert) were born in Israel. The majority of prime ministers were appointed to the office at a relatively advanced age, typically following long political careers.

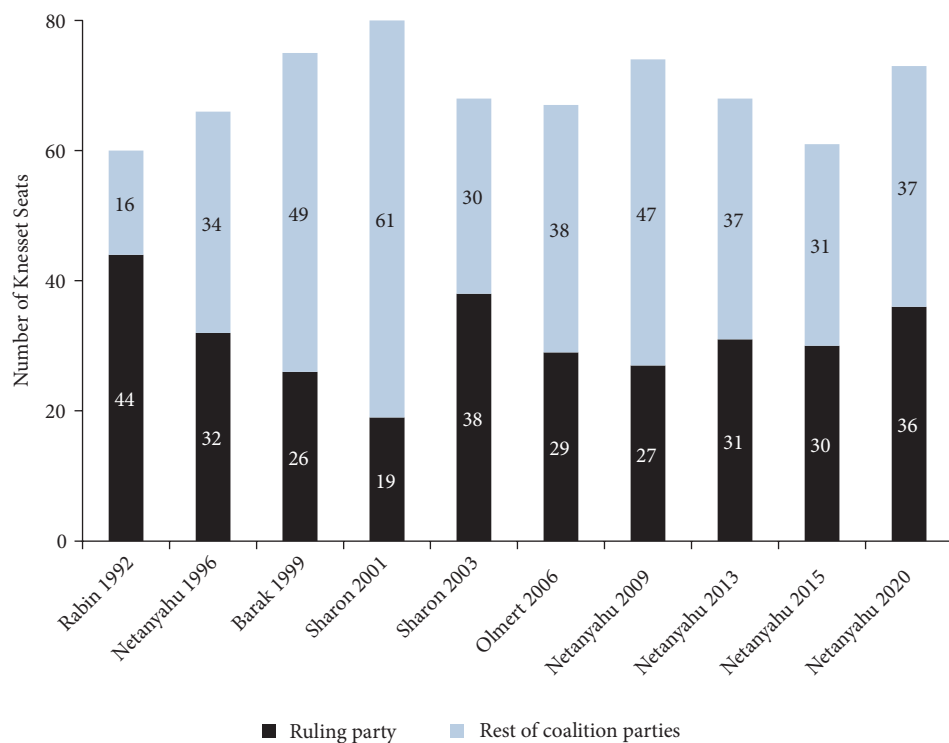


FIGURE 16.1 The size of the prime minister's party within the coalition.

Table 16.2 Prime Ministers of Israel

Prime Minister	Party	Age at First Appointment	Years in Office
David Ben Gurion	Mapai	61	1948–1954, 1955–1963
Moshe Sharett	Mapai	59	1954–1955
Levi Eshkol	Mapai/Labor	67	1963–1969
Golda Meir	Labor	70	1969–1974
Yitzhak Rabin	Labor	52	1974–1977, 1992–1995
Menachem Begin	Likud	63	1977–1983
Yitzhak Shamir	Likud	68	1983–1984, 1986–1992
Shimon Peres	Labor	61	1984–1986, 1995–1996
Benjamin Netanyahu	Likud	47	1996–1999, 2009–
Ehud Barak	Labor	55	1999–2001
Ariel Sharon	Likud/Kadima	73	2001–2006
Ehud Olmert	Kadima	60	2006–2009

Prime ministers are the central and most powerful political actors in Israel. A prime minister is the head of the executive branch and the cabinet and as such has enormous influence on the coalition that dominates the majority in the Knesset. Prime ministers are also the leaders of their parties, a position that further enhances their political power. The executive branch is defined by the Basic Law: The Government as a cabinet government headed by a first among equals prime minister. Article 3(1) states that “the cabinet is composed of the prime minister and other ministers.” Yet prime ministers are in a privileged position compared to their cabinet ministers: they command the public spotlight, set the agenda of cabinet meetings, and enjoy the resources of the powerful Prime Minister’s Office. Prime ministers thus occupy a superior position, hold a near-monopoly on power resources, and are the undisputed focus of executive power (Arian, 2005).

But beyond these observations, there is disagreement surrounding the question of whether Israeli prime ministers have become stronger or weaker over time. In his account of the presidentialization of politics in Israel, Hazan (2005) argues that prime ministers gradually became stronger, even before the adoption of the direct election system in the 1990s. He especially points to the strengthening of the Prime Minister’s Office (at the expense of the Knesset, the parties, and the ministers) and of institutional powers such as the dismissal of ministers. The final evaluation is that of a strong trend toward presidentialization, indicating an increase in the power of prime ministers (Webb & Poguntke, 2005, p. 339).

O’Malley (2007), however, uses an expert survey aimed at evaluating the influence of prime ministers and puts the Israeli prime minister in the ninth place among twenty-two parliamentary democracies. Based on this work, Karvonen (2010, pp. 28–29) calculated the gaps between the experts’ estimations in an early point in time and a later point and found that Israeli prime ministers had weakened somewhat.

A possible way to settle this dispute is by distinguishing between changes in the constitutional powers of prime ministers and political changes that affect their influence. Looking at the legal-constitutional framework, there is little doubt that prime ministers have become stronger. First, as mentioned previously, the law was amended in the early 1980s to grant prime ministers the complete authority to dismiss ministers.⁶ Second, the authority of prime ministers to dissolve the Knesset, originally introduced as part of the direct election law, survived its abolition and was incorporated into the new (current) law. This mechanism gives prime ministers considerable leverage in their power relations vis-à-vis the legislature. Third, it became much more difficult to remove a government in a vote of no confidence, thus reinforcing the position of prime ministers and their governments (for more details see the section on government termination). Finally, the law grants prime ministers (and in the 2020 government, also the alternate prime minister) a privileged position regarding criminal allegations against them. While the High Court of Justice has ruled that a minister must be removed once he or she is indicted for a crime, prime ministers are forced to resign only if found guilty in a final verdict.⁷

Table 16.3 Ministers in the Four Major Ministries

	Finance	Defense	Foreign Affairs	Education
1955	<i>Eshkol</i>	<i>Ben Gurion</i>	<i>Sharett</i>	<i>Aran</i>
1966	<i>Sapir</i>	<i>Eshkol</i>	<i>Eban</i>	<i>Aran</i>
1974	<i>Rabinovich</i>	<i>Peres</i>	<i>Alon</i>	<i>Yadlin</i>
1981	<i>Aridor</i>	<i>Sharon</i>	<i>Shamir</i>	Hamer
1984	Modai	<i>Rabin</i>	Shamir	Navon
1996	<i>Meridor</i>	<i>Mordechai</i>	<i>Levi</i>	Hamer
1999	<i>Shohat</i>	<i>Barak</i>	<i>Levi</i>	Sarid
2001	<i>Shalom</i>	Ben-Eliezer	Peres	<i>Livnat</i>
2003	<i>Netanyahu</i>	<i>Mofaz</i>	<i>Shalom</i>	<i>Livnat</i>
2006	<i>Hirschzon</i>	Peretz	<i>Livni</i>	Tamir
2009	<i>Steinitz</i>	Barak	Lieberman	<i>Saar</i>
2013	Lapid	<i>Yaalon</i>	<i>Lieberman</i>	Piron
2016	Kachlon	Lieberman	<i>Netanyahu</i>	Bennett

Italic indicates ministers from the prime minister's parliamentary party group.

However, even if prime ministers have become constitutionally stronger, political developments have not worked in their favor, have often frustrated them, and sometimes have given the impression of a rather weak chief executive. The main reason for this is the gradual decrease in the electoral performance of the prime minister's party. As already mentioned (Figure 16.1), the prime minister's party—the central base of power for any prime minister—has considerably weakened. As a result, not only are more parties needed to form a coalition, but their bargaining power and ability to constrain prime ministers have also increased in many aspects.

A good illustration of these developments is the allocation of ministries. Traditionally the prime minister's party kept the major ministries in its hands and allocated less important portfolios to its coalition partners. This pattern has changed considerably in the last two decades. Table 16.3 details the ministers appointed to four major ministries in thirteen cabinets. Italic type indicates ministers from the prime minister's party. As can be seen, in the era of Mapai dominance, all four ministries were under its control. Even afterward, prime ministers' parties kept at least three of the four ministries, except for the national unity governments based on parity between the two large parties. But since 2006 the prime minister's party has lost its grip on the major ministries. In Netanyahu's fourth cabinet, Likud was forced to give three of the four ministries to its coalition partners.

THE CABINET AND THE MINISTERS

As is the case in other parliamentary democracies, the Israeli cabinet⁸ is headed by a chief executive (a prime minister) and composed of cabinet members (ministers). A

ministerial position is a prime destination for every Israeli politician, because it secures a voice and a vote in the cabinet plenum, where policies are designed and decisions are made. More important, in almost all cases the minister heads an executive ministry (portfolio), which allows him or her to have a say in policy design, grants the minister public visibility, and enables rewarding loyal allies by appointing them to various positions within the ministry.⁹

Although cabinet formation and ministerial selection are very important, constitutions usually say little about these processes. Israel is no exception in this regard. The current Basic Law: The Government only limits the eligibility of ministers, requiring ministers to be Israeli citizens and residents, and prohibits the nomination of a person who was recently imprisoned, requiring that at least seven years elapse from the end of the period of imprisonment to the day of appointment.

Israeli cabinets have gradually increased in size (see Table 16.1). In the 1950s the number of ministers was rather small (twelve to sixteen), but later it grew to twenty-six (1988), thirty (2009), and thirty-four (2020). The swelling in the number of cabinet members also affected the structure of the executive ministries. Wishing to avoid appointment to the unpopular title of “minister without portfolio,” cabinet members demanded creative solutions. These materialized in the form of splitting existing ministries and inventing new ones (I return to this issue in the last section). Since some ministers, and often prime ministers, hold more than one portfolio, the number of ministries is even greater than the number of cabinet members. For example, Netanyahu’s fourth cabinet in 2016 included twenty-three members but twenty-nine ministries. Efforts to limit the number of ministers did not prevail against political-coalitional pressures for ministerial appointments.¹⁰

The selection of ministers is a highly partisan process; cabinet membership is allocated to parties (at the coalition level) and by parties (intraparty level). At the coalition level, cabinet positions in Israel are allocated in line with Gamson’s (1961) proportionality law: the share of cabinet seats each coalition party receives reflects its weight within the coalition. However, it is interesting to note, in contrast to studies that indicate a slight bias in favor of small parties, that portfolio allocation in Israeli cabinets tends to rather overrepresent the prime minister’s party (Kenig & Barnea, 2015). The reason is that prime ministers, who are often forced to give important ministries to coalition partners, compensate their own parties by appointing more ministers from them. In this manner, even if the prime minister’s party is in a minority position within the coalition, it holds a majority among cabinet members. Generally, prime ministers do not interfere with the selection of ministers by their coalition partners and thus are limited in shaping the personal composition of the cabinet.

At the intraparty level, prime ministers hold an absolute prerogative to appoint ministers from their own party. However, in practice their autonomy is constrained even here by intraparty politics. This process was accelerated after the large parties adopted primary elections to select their Knesset candidates. Prime ministers could not pass over candidates who received a large number of votes from party members and were pressured to appoint them to the cabinet. Kenig and Barnea (2009) have pointed to a

high correlation between the ranking on the list of candidates and the prospects of being selected as a cabinet minister.

The highly partisan nature of ministerial selection is also reflected in the background of ministers. To begin with, although the law specifies that the prime minister (but not the other ministers) must be an MK, an overwhelming majority of ministers are also MKs. Fewer than 5 percent of all ministers were recruited from outside of the legislative arena. So-called specialist ministers—for example, three lawyers were appointed as ministers of justice—are extremely rare. Hence the “highway” to a ministerial appointment is through partisan channels. Analyzing pathways to the cabinet, Kenig and Barnea (2015) found that about 70 percent of ministers started their careers in partisan activity (such as being representatives in local government or through activity in labor unions and student associations). The second largest group (14 percent), significantly smaller, is the “ex-generals,” ministers with a military background.

The representation of women in Israeli politics is gradually improving (Shapira et al., 2016), but as of 2020 they were still underrepresented in the cabinet. Only 24 of a total 267 individuals (9 percent) who were appointed to the cabinet between 1949 and 2020 were women. The underrepresentation of Arabs is even more severe. Although the Arab minority comprises about one-fifth of the Israeli population, only three non-Jewish ministers have so far been appointed. This underrepresentation reflects the marginal position of the Arab minority in Israeli politics—the multiple Arab parties over time have never been part of a coalition government—and their traditional exclusion from decision-making organs.

The weekly meetings of the cabinet are normally held on Sundays (the beginning of the work week in Israel) at the Prime Minister’s Office in Jerusalem. The short opening public statement by the prime minister often finds its way to the evening news on television. Not much is known, in a systematic way, about the interactions and dynamics within the cabinet. The agenda of the cabinet meetings is determined by the prime minister, in consultation with the cabinet secretary.¹¹

Considerable decision-making power is delegated from the cabinet plenum to smaller ministerial committees. These committees allow a group of ministers to decide more effectively on various issues. Over time the number of ministerial committees has grown considerably, but only a few function continuously. Two stand out and should be mentioned. The most prestigious committee—and the only one required by law—is the Ministerial Committee on National Security Affairs (also known as the Security Cabinet; see note 8), which discusses matters related to foreign affairs and security. This smaller forum is designated to coordinate diplomatic negotiations, and in times of crisis, especially war, it is designed to make quick and effective decisions. The Ministerial Committee for Legislation has become a powerful and important committee. Headed by the minister of justice, its main function is to decide whether the governing coalition will support or oppose bills that are to be voted on in the Knesset. The norm of coalition discipline (all MKs who are part of the coalition vote in unity) means that the decisions taken in this committee can either guarantee that a bill will pass or doom a bill to almost certain defeat in the Knesset.

TERMINATION OF GOVERNMENTS

If events went by the book, governments should take office shortly after general elections (following coalition negotiations) and should last until the next general election, which are scheduled every four years. Remarkably, an overwhelming majority of Israeli governments did not complete their constitutional terms and came to a premature end. This happened for a number of reasons and in various political circumstances.

The law outlines several causes for the termination of a government. First, the death of the prime minister also means the end of the government. This has happened twice: Levi Eshkol died in 1969 and Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in 1995. Second, the resignation of the prime minister also entails the resignation of the government. For example, the departures of Golda Meir (1974), Menachem Begin (1983), and Ehud Olmert (2008) also ended their governments.¹² In both cases the termination of the government did not necessarily mean new elections. Instead, a new process of government formation began. In fact, sometimes a nearly identical coalition was formed and marked a *de facto* continuation of the previous one.

Third, as a fundamental feature of parliamentary systems, a government comes to an end if it loses a motion of no confidence held in the Knesset. The vote of no confidence has gone through three incarnations in Israel's constitutional history. Until 1992 a plurality of the votes was enough to oust a government. That happened once, in 1990, when Shamir's government lost the motion by a vote of 60 to 55. In 2001 the law was amended so governments would fall only by an absolute majority of at least sixty-one MKs.¹³ That amendment fortified the position of the government, which could now afford to "lose" a motion of no confidence as long as the number of MKs voting against it was sixty or fewer. Finally, a constructive vote of no confidence was adopted in 2014. It ends the government's tenure only by expressing support (with at least sixty-one MKs) for an alternative government (see the chapter by Friedberg & Hazan on the legislative branch in this volume).

Governments often prematurely end their terms as a result of coalition crisis and a realization that the government has reached a political dead end. Under such circumstances the ruling coalition coordinates with the opposition to bring to the floor a bill on early dissolution, with a date for new elections.¹⁴ This ends the terms of both the legislature and the government. Since the turn of the century this has been the most common dynamic that has shortened the life of governments.

(IN)STABILITY AND GOVERNABILITY

Israel is often described as a democracy with unstable governments that result in a low level of governance. This is backed by public sentiment: in a survey taken in 2009,

Table 16.4 Durability of Cabinets and Four Executive Positions (Averages, in Years)

	1949–1996	1996–2020	1949–2020
Cabinets (34)	1.8	3.0	2.1
Prime Ministers (17)	4.0	4.8	4.2
Ministers of Finance (27)	3.1	1.9	2.6
Ministers of Education (23)	3.6	2.3	3.0
Ministers of Internal Affairs (32)	2.5	1.8	2.2

54 percent of respondents said that Israel is less stable than other democracies (Arian, Philippov, & Knafelman, 2009, p. 114). Furthermore, the sense of a lack of governability is translated, problematically, into a yearning for a strong leader. In a 2016 survey, over 40 percent of respondents agreed that Israel needs “a strong leader who is not swayed by the Knesset, the media or public opinion” (Hermann et al., 2016, p. 210).

Are these descriptions and sentiments supported by empirical facts? The answer depends on what we mean by stability and how we measure it.¹⁵ A common approach is to measure government stability by cabinet durability. Table 16.4 shows the average durations of cabinets and of four executive positions. It uses the year 1996 as a cut-off point to differentiate between two periods. This year marked an important institutional change (the direct election law) and also a fundamental change in Israel’s social composition due to the mass immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union. These two attributes, along with others such as the shift of Arab voters to mainly Arab parties, altered the Israeli political landscape.

Values in parentheses show the number of consecutive terms. Hence, while there were twelve prime ministers, the terms of five of them were interrupted and they are thus counted twice.

The average term of cabinets for the whole period is about two years. Surprisingly, cabinets survived longer in the later period than in the earlier one (3.0 versus 1.8 years). But that is somewhat misleading and can be explained by the frequent political resignations of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, who at the time lacked the formal authority to dismiss ministers. The solution involved the prime minister’s personal resignation, thus forcing the cabinet’s dissolution and eliciting the formation of a new cabinet. The new immediately formed cabinets were identical to their predecessors save for the renegade minister(s).

Moreover, looking at the average durations of both cabinets and prime ministers in the two periods, it can be argued that political stability had not worsened. This impression is emphasized by the fact Benjamin Netanyahu holds the record among prime ministers for the longest consecutive term, currently (as of 2020) over eleven years. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, institutional changes have made it much more difficult to oust a government or a prime minister. In terms of survival, prime ministers are safer today than in the past.

But the survival of prime ministers often obscures extreme instability within their cabinets. To reveal this instability we must look at the frequent changes in the composition of coalitions, which lead to very high ministerial turnover. Indeed, the picture appears quite different when we look at the durability of ministers. On average, the ministers of finance and of internal affairs have survived less than two years in office since 1996, significantly less time than during the earlier period. The tenure of ministers of education in that same period has been slightly better, with an average of 2.3 years, but again this is much less time than before.

This high turnover is by no means the result of reshuffles initiated by powerful prime ministers aimed at refreshing the cabinet or moving an unsuccessful minister to another position. In fact, prime ministers are rather constrained in changing their cabinets. Reshuffles usually occur only when there is a substantive addition or resignation of a party or parties comprising the cabinet (Kenig & Barnea, 2015). Here lies a significant explanation for the high turnover of ministers. The formal duration of a cabinet often conceals internal changes that affect its stability. Ministers who head a ministry for under two years are unlikely to be able to implement major policies. For example, the thirtieth government formally lasted for three years, but within that period it had no fewer than seven different combinations of parties. Every such change automatically entailed a redistribution of the ministerial appointments, making ministers highly transient.

Adding to the instability of cabinets are the frequent changes in the structure of ministries. These include the splitting of ministries, the transferring of authorities and fields of responsibility from one ministry to another, and the creation of new ministries.¹⁶ These changes are not made based on considerations of effectiveness or due to broad structural reforms that will improve the work of government. They are almost always a byproduct of coalitional demands and of individual/personal gains. The result is a patchwork of overlapping ministries that serves only to hamper the effective working of government. The end result of high ministerial turnover and frequent changes in the structure of government is an unstable working environment (for both the political and the professional-administrative levels) that narrows the ability to plan and promote long-term policies.

Some attribute the lack of governability to the growing impact of nonelective veto players such as the permanent (nonpolitical) civil service, particularly the budget department within the Ministry of Finance (Nachmias & Arbel-Ganz, 2005; Rosenthal, 2017). Most notably, there is increased involvement of the judicial branch, empowering and enforcing the ministries' legal advisers to implement the Supreme Court's rulings on public policy (Meydani, 2009, p. 34). Ministers are often frustrated by this judicialization of politics, alleging that it puts a spoke in the government's wheels. Minister of Justice Ayelet Shaked remarked that "the fine balance between the elected and professional levels was disturbed in favor of the latter... the legal advisers are involved in almost every activity the ministry promotes and often have more actual power than the (elected) minister" (Tzimuki, 2017). Even Prime Minister Netanyahu complained that "Israel suffers from hyper-regulation, hyper-bureaucracy and hyper-judicialization" (Bassok, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the main features of the executive branch in Israel. As in many other parliamentary democracies, the prime minister and the executive branch have become more powerful. However, despite legal amendments that have strengthened the position of Israeli prime ministers vis-à-vis other actors, their ability to exercise power is constrained by a fragmented party system that forces the formation of multiparty coalitions. This constraint is particularly evident in the weakness of the prime minister's party. Under such circumstances, prime ministers are quite secure in office, but this should not be mistaken for effectiveness. Frequent changes in the set of parties that compose the coalition, high turnover in ministerial positions, and early elections all serve to undermine the ability of the executive to plan and implement major policies and important reforms.

NOTES

1. This Basic Law was wholly amended twice. This chapter refers to its current version, which was legislated in 2001 and came into force two years later.
2. For many years coalition agreements were hidden from the public eye. The growing norm of transparency, together with political scandals in the early 1990s involving dubious coalition deals and personal payoffs, led to the amendment of the law. Today coalition agreements are transparent by law and must be presented to the Knesset before the vote of investiture.
3. Concerning the rules regarding the counting of governments, I use the formal counting accepted in Israel. This counting only includes the instances in which a vote of investiture takes place; it does not include a change in the party composition of the ruling coalition (even an extensive change) as a new government.
4. This figure refers to the beginning of the government term. See also footnote to Table 16.1.
5. One time (in 1995) the formal coalition started its term in a minority position, but it was supported by a confidence-and-supply agreement of Far Left parties.
6. Until the early 1960s prime ministers lacked any legal authority to dismiss ministers. In 1962 the law was amended to authorize the dismissal of a minister who violated the collective responsibility principle. However, prime ministers still lacked the power to dismiss a minister on other grounds. This authority was finally granted only in 1981, when the law was amended to state that "the prime minister may, after notifying the government of his intention to do so, remove a minister from office." In the unique government formed in 2020 (the Netanyahu–Gantz alternate government) the prime minister is not allowed to fire ministers who were appointed by the alternate prime minister.
7. The resignation of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in 2008, in the face of a corruption scandal he was involved in, was not mandated by law. Rather, it was the result of political pressure from inside his coalition.
8. In Israeli political jargon, the "government" often refers to the group of individuals that includes the prime minister and the ministers. I use "cabinet," the more recognizable term in the literature, to refer to this institution. Confusingly, "cabinet" in the Israeli context is used to describe the Ministerial Committee on National Security Affairs, a statutory body with even higher prestige than the government (see below).

9. The position of deputy minister was originally created to assist ministers in the area of their ministry. These positions were later evolved to be mainly coalition payoffs and seldom wield considerable power. Deputy ministers are not cabinet members, do not attend cabinet meetings, and do not have voting rights.
10. The direct elections law, enacted in 1996, specified an upper limit of eighteen ministers but was abolished three years later as part of the formation of Ehud Barak's cabinet. In 2014 the law was amended again, limiting the size of the cabinet to nineteen ministers. Again, the amendment did not last; it was suspended in the first instance of cabinet formation that followed in 2015.
11. The Cabinet Secretariat is an administrative unit accountable to the prime minister and to the director general of the prime minister's office. It is headed by the cabinet secretary, sometimes recruited from the prime minister's party and sometimes a professional. Several cabinet secretaries later become prominent politicians or were appointed attorney general.
12. Similarly, the law says that if a prime minister ceases to be an MK, or if he is found guilty (in a final verdict) of an offense that the court defined as involving moral turpitude, his term in office ends automatically and thus also the term of the government.
13. During the interim decade, the prime minister was directly elected, and only he could be removed from power by a vote of no confidence. This vote required an absolute majority, and if passed it would have simultaneously terminated the government's term of office as well.
14. Under the Basic Law: The Knesset, such a resolution must be approved by a vote of at least sixty-one MKs. The law also states that if the Knesset fails to approve the government's state budget by March 31, it is dissolved and early elections are called. This explains why since the 2000s elections are always held in the first quarter of the calendar year (instead of in October–November as stated by the law): the anticipation of coalition quarrels regarding the budget has pushed the political system toward early elections.
15. In this chapter I do not refer to the stability of the regime, which is evaluated, among other things, through indicators such as lack of violence and legitimacy. Rather, the focus is on government stability.
16. Some of the fringe-like ministries that have been created since the early 2000s are Regional Cooperation, Development of the Negev and the Galil, Senior Citizens, Jerusalem Affairs, Strategic Affairs, Diaspora Affairs, and Information.

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CHAPTER 17

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH IN ISRAEL

CHEN FRIEDBERG AND REUVEN Y. HAZAN

THE Israeli parliament is an extremely interesting case study, often appearing under a global spotlight yet somewhat understudied. There are only a few, mainly outdated, English-language academic books on the Israeli legislature, such as Mahler (1981), Sager (1985), and Hazan (2001). Most of the books in Hebrew were written by former Knesset employees, politicians, and reporters (Bader, 1979; Flekser, 1977; Israeli, 1988; Lorch, 1984; Maor, 2009; Tzidon, 1971; Weiss, 1977). The bulk of academic attention devoted to this institution can be found in articles or in chapters in edited books on Israeli politics, which analyze it from institutional, behavioral, cultural, political, and personal angles (e.g., Arian, 2005; Goldberg, 2003; Mahler, 2016; Blander & Galnoor, 2018). A comparative analytical approach of the Israeli Knesset is sorely lacking (Hazan, 2001 is now outdated; Rahat, Barnea, Friedberg & Kenig, 2013 appeared only in Hebrew).

The Knesset's roots go back at least one hundred years, if not much further. The Knesset's name and size come from the historic "Knesset HaGdola" (the "Large Knesset"), an assembly of 120 scribes, prophets, and sages active from the fourth century BC until the days of the Second Temple. With the establishment of the British Mandate in Palestine in 1917, it became necessary for the Jewish community there (known as the Yishuv) to form voluntary political institutions representing its own interests to the mandatory authorities. One of these was the Assembly of Representatives, the supreme representative body of the Yishuv, first elected in 1920 and active until 1948. The elections for the assembly were held on a party basis according to lists of candidates, in countrywide proportional elections. Indeed, many of the assembly's characteristics were inherited by the parliament elected after independence in 1948.

LEGAL INFRASTRUCTURE

At the time of independence in May 1948, the Provisional State Council was appointed as the temporary legislature of Israel. It was dissolved upon the election of the Constituent Assembly in January 1949. The role of the Constituent Assembly was to write a constitution, but for various reasons it did not do so (see the chapter by Mahler on the constitutional system in this volume). In February 1949 the Constituent Assembly ratified the Transition Law, which transitioned the Constituent Assembly into a legislative institution, changing its name to the First Knesset. It was not until a year later that the Knesset reached a compromise on the constitutional issue, and the Harari Resolution was passed. The resolution, named after Member of Knesset (MK) Yizhar Harari of the Progressive Party, stated that a constitution would ultimately be composed—not as a single document, but pieced together by a series of individual Basic Laws that would be formulated and adopted over time. The Knesset’s Constitution, Law and Justice Committee was entrusted with the preparation of the Basic Laws, which would subsequently require approval by the Knesset. The First Knesset was, therefore, both a legislative assembly (since it passed “regular” laws) and a constituent assembly (since it could pass Basic Laws), and both of these powers have been transferred to all subsequent legislatures. Thus, in Israel an ongoing process of constitution making lives side by side with the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty.

The status of the Knesset, its powers, and its jurisdiction are anchored in several laws. The first and foremost is Basic Law: The Knesset, enacted in 1958. It did not define the powers of the Knesset but stated that its seat is in Jerusalem and that it should include 120 members. The law deals with the electoral system and the elections, the right to vote and be elected, the Knesset’s tenure, the status of Knesset members, their parliamentary immunity, and the work of the Knesset and its committees. The second law is the Knesset Law, enacted in 1994. It is an ordinary law that elaborates the working arrangements of the committees, the procedure for selecting the speaker of the Knesset, the MKs’ salary, the rules for party¹ splits, the status of the leader of the opposition, the function of the Knesset’s legal adviser, the powers of the Parliamentary Research and Information Center, and other issues. A law that defines the Knesset’s jurisdiction vis-à-vis the government is Basic Law: The Government (originally enacted in 1968). Finally, the Knesset’s Rules of Procedure is not a law but rather the “manual” of the Knesset and its committees, specifying the procedure for meetings, the timetable for the plenum, the legislative process, the oversight tools of the Knesset, MKs’ ethical norms, and so forth.

Although the legal infrastructure of the Knesset may seem quite strong, it is not as solid as it appears to be. All of the items mentioned previously can be revised quite easily with a simple plurality vote, except for the Basic Law: The Government and a few articles in the Basic Law: The Knesset that require an absolute majority. Indeed, all four including the Basic Laws, have been revised dozens of times, often for purely political reasons.

KNESSET FUNCTIONS

The three prominent functions of the Knesset are similar to those of any other democratic legislature: representation, legislation, and oversight of the executive. The Knesset mirrors and represents the pluralism of Israeli society through the many parties elected to it. The proportional electoral system, with its historically relatively low threshold, produces a high level of representation, and it turns the Knesset into an arena requiring political compromises across social groups in order to make decisions. The Knesset approves laws on all topics, except those that deny the existence of the State of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people or are racist.

Surprisingly, the power of the Knesset to legislate alongside the entire legislative process is not anchored in a Basic Law or in any ordinary law related to the Knesset. The arrangements regarding the different types of legislation and the stages of the legislative process are specified only in the Knesset's Rules of Procedure, an internal code that has weaker legal status than any law, binds only the MKs, and can be quite easily revised by the House Committee with the approval of the plenum (Blander & Klein, 2001). Israel is one of the only democracies that did not anchor the legislative powers of its parliament in a constitution or in any law.

Another important function of the Knesset is to oversee the executive branch. This function can be executed in several ways, some of them "strong," and some of them "weak." Strong oversight involves severe sanctions, the heaviest being to remove the government from office in a vote of no-confidence. Weak oversight involves ongoing parliamentary actions in the plenum or in the committees, such as criticism, investigation, questioning, verification, and calls for accountability (Gregory, 1990; Koura & Wiberg, 1994). The oversight tools that the Knesset has, similar to those in other legislatures, are committees of all kinds, questions and question time, motions for the agenda, and so forth (Chazan, 2005).

THE PLENUM ARENA

The plenum is the most public arena. Beyond its representative role, the two other prominent functions of the Knesset are carried out in the plenum.

Legislation

The legislative process in the Knesset follows the standard parliamentary procedure fairly closely. Bills can be initiated by the government, by the committees, or by MKs (private member bills). Government and committee bills must pass three readings,

Table 17.1 Type of Bills Passed by the Knesset, 1949–2020

Knesset (Years in Office)		Total Bills Passed	Government Bills Passed		Private Member Bills Passed		Committee Bills Passed	
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	1949–1951	221	220	99	1	1	—	—
2	1951–1955	280	274	98	6	2	—	—
3	1955–1959	291	280	96	11	4	—	—
4	1959–1961	125	114	91	11	9	—	—
5	1961–1965	281	246	87	35	13	—	—
6	1965–1969	257	232	90	25	10	—	—
7	1969–1973	333	294	88	39	12	—	—
8	1973–1977	358	283	79	70	20	5	1
9	1977–1981	391	305	78	82	21	4	1
10	1981–1984	195	155	79	29	15	11	6
11	1984–1988	291	218	75	69	24	4	1
12	1988–1992	346	198	57	140	41	8	2
13	1992–1996	485	217	45	250	52	18	3
14	1996–1999	290	133	46	138	48	19	6
15	1999–2003	465	211	45	238	51	16	4
16	2003–2006	423	210	50	198	47	15	3
17	2006–2009	441	210	47	224	51	7	2
18	2009–2013	597	316	53	274	46	7	1
19	2013–2015	263	149	57	112	42	2	1
20	2015–2019	625	359	58	246	39	20	3
21	5/2019–10/2019	3	1	33	2*	67	—	—
22	10/2019–3/2020	6	3	50	3*	50	—	—

* The twenty-first and the twenty-second Knessets each served for less than six months, due to consecutive early elections called in the aftermath of not forming a new government. The few private bills passed by each Knesset mainly addressed the early elections. For example, the twenty-first Knesset passed the dissolution law of the twenty-first Knesset and the election law for the twenty-second Knesset.

Source: Knesset—The Legal Department (2019), updated from the Israel National Legislation Database.

while private member bills must pass four readings (the same as government/committee bills plus a preliminary reading). Until the twelfth Knesset (1988–1992), most of the laws were initiated by the government. Since then the picture has changed quite dramatically; almost half of the laws passed have been initiated by MKs (see Table 17.1).

Since the early 1990s the MKs have also tabled a rather enormous number of private bills, but only 5 percent on average have become laws (see Table 17.2). While Israel already stands out when it comes to the percentage of overall legislation passed that originated as private member bills, it is clearly an outlier in the number of private member bills proposed. It should be noted that the number of private member bills in Israel is quite exceptional from a comparative perspective (see Figure 17.1). In the years

Table 17.2 Private Member Bills Tabled and Passed in the Knesset

Knesset (Years in Office)		Private Member Bills Tabled	Private Member Bills Passed	
		No.	No.	%
9	1977–1981	231	82	35
10	1981–1984	415	29	7
11	1984–1988	706	69	10
12	1988–1992	1,448	140	10
13	1992–1996	3,426	250	7
14	1996–1999	2,614	138	5
15	1999–2003	3,978	238	5
16	2003–2006	4,707	198	4
17	2006–2009	4,095	224	5
18	2009–2013	4,654	274	5
19	2013–2015	2,923	112	4
20	2015–2019	5,597	246	4
21	5/2019–10/2019	554	2	0.3
22	10/2019–3/2020	1,420	3	0.2

Source: Ministry of Justice (2017), updated from the Israel National Legislation Database.

between 2000 and 2020, Israeli MKs tabled more than twenty-six thousand private bills, while in most of the Western democracies MPs have submitted between several hundred to several thousand bills at most.

The reasons for the enormous number of private member bills in Israel are, first and foremost, a lack of quotas and few limitations. Knesset members are not limited in the number of private member bills they are permitted to submit.² There are also no boundaries on the content of private member bills, except that they cannot violate Knesset procedural rules that prohibit approving a bill that is “racist in its essence or that denies the existence of the State of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people.”

There are also reasons for the growth in the number of private member bills that are related to drawbacks and developments in the political system, as well as in other arenas. First, the coalition governments in Israel have been less stable since the mid-1990s. The experiment of directly electing the prime minister (see the chapter in this volume by Hazan on the party system) reduced the power of the main parties, thereby allowing individual MKs to submit more private member bills. Second, party primaries, adopted first by Labor in 1992 and by Likud and other parties in 1996, weakened party cohesion and party discipline (Hazan, 2015). MKs selected through primaries must stand out as individuals and not as part of their parliamentary party group, and one way they do so is by tabling private member bills. Third, since the 1990s interest groups have increasingly penetrated the Knesset and are using MKs as channels to influence public policy by convincing them to promote legislative initiatives they formulate on behalf of their clients. Fourth, since the oversight tools the Knesset has are somewhat ineffective (as discussed

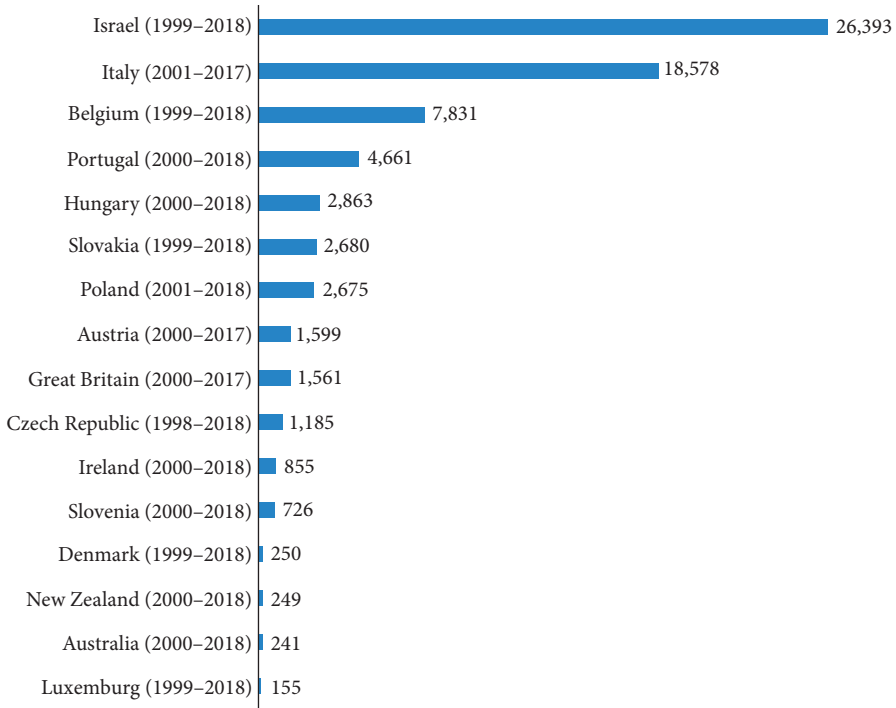


FIGURE 17.1 Private member bills tabled, a comparative perspective, 1998–2018.

Source: Data collected from the parliamentary information centers.

later), the tendency of MKs to use an available channel such as private legislation to get the government's attention has increased. Finally, compared to many parliaments in the democratic world, the Knesset's Rules of Procedure do not set high qualitative standards or quantitative limitations for formulating and submitting private member bills. For instance, there are no clear directives about what background or explanation should be provided and almost no restrictions on the budgets for private member bills.

Attempts to reduce this high number of private member bills have largely failed. For example, a restriction was passed in 2002 that a private member bill that impacts the state budget (defined as costing 5 million NIS or more) requires a minimum of 50 MKs to vote in favor of the bill in all three readings. This did not succeed in reducing the number of private member bills tabled or those passed (see Table 17.2).

What is the problem with so many private member bills, especially if only a small minority actually become laws? The problem is that dealing with such an enormous number of them diminishes the legislative process, in that it degrades the meaning of a bill; many private member bills are copied and resubmitted with few or no changes. It also causes a waste of professional manpower in the Knesset, as well as in the government, which must address all these bills. It overloads the Knesset committees as well as the Ministerial Committee for Legislation. Moreover, due to a lack of time most private member bills

are not discussed properly. Finally, and most important, many private laws passed are not implemented by the government. The Israeli Knesset is thus perhaps the largest “legislative factory” among parliamentary democracies; however, it is certainly not an efficient one.

Oversight

Oversight in the plenum is exercised using several tools: motions for the agenda, questions and question time, a declaration of a state of emergency, and the vote of no-confidence.

Motions for the Agenda

This tool allows MKs to place issues on the Knesset agenda. It is a party tool because the House Committee determines each year how many motions each parliamentary party group may table in that year. A motion for the agenda requires the approval of the speaker of the Knesset.³ Before a motion is debated, the government announces whether it is interested in expressing an opinion on the issue. The plenum then decides whether to remove a motion from its agenda, debate it, or refer it to a committee for further deliberation. Knesset records show that even if the plenum does not remove a motion from its agenda or refer it to a committee, in many cases no deliberation will take place at all—in which case the motion is automatically dropped after three months.

While one can argue about whether this oversight tool was ever effective, recently its effectiveness has clearly been eroded. To deal with this problem, the Knesset decided in 2011 that any MK may propose a motion for a “quick debate” in one of the Knesset’s committees. The MK is required to submit the proposal to the Knesset Presidium, which discusses the suggestion that same week and decides whether or not to refer it to a committee for a quick debate. The chosen committee is required to begin the debate within ten days. Following the quick discussion, the committee’s conclusions are submitted to the plenum, and in special cases the speaker of the Knesset may determine that the entire plenum will hold a debate on these conclusions. Despite this improvement, thus far the effectiveness of this oversight tool is still questionable.

Parliamentary Questions and Question Time

There are three types of questions in the Knesset. The most common is the ordinary question, which is presented in the plenum and should be answered by the minister within twenty-one days and no later than six months. An urgent question is presented in the plenum as well and should be answered within two days—but only a few are approved to be asked each week. A direct question is presented in writing only, by the Knesset Secretariat⁴ to the minister concerned, and the answer is given in writing, usually within twenty-one days. Ordinary parliamentary questions are not very effective because the ministers to whom the questions are addressed are not careful about responding within the allotted time period—and twenty-one days is already an inordinately

long time to wait for an answer in the current information age. Moreover, no sanctions can be taken against ministers who do not respond at all, and the origin of many of the questions is the media—not necessarily a reliable source of information.

Question time was first established in the Knesset in 1997 but was not activated seriously despite some attempts over the years. In 2016 it was reestablished, and the House Committee now sets ten sessions during each parliamentary year in which MKs address questions to the prime minister or to the ministers concerning their ministries. Three-quarters of these questions must come from the opposition parties.

Declaration of a State of Emergency

A state of emergency was proclaimed in May 1948, four days after the establishment of Israel when the War of Independence had already begun. It was declared to help the temporary government deal with the immediate threats facing the young country. The state of emergency, which is based on British Mandate laws and includes hundreds of orders dealing with security, civil, and economic matters, has remained in force ever since. This legal status enables the government to stipulate emergency regulations that can sequester any law (except for laws that are protected from such intervention). Until 1996 Knesset oversight regarding a state of emergency was practically nonexistent. Since then the Knesset has moved toward greater accountability (Friedberg & Hazan, 2009a). For example, the Knesset is empowered to declare, by its own initiative or by the government's suggestion, a state of emergency for up to one year, and must redeclare it every year (the government may declare it as well, but only for a week unless it is approved by the Knesset). The Knesset is also the only body empowered to abort this declaration. However, the Knesset has never refused to redeclare/extend the state of emergency, since articles in many laws are dependent on this legal status and its termination will lead automatically to their cancellation (Blander & Galnoor, 2018; Rubinstein & Medina, 2005).

Vote of No-Confidence

Beginning at independence, Israel had a regular vote of no-confidence, according to which a government could be toppled by a plurality in the Knesset. In 2001 it adopted a semiconstructive vote of no-confidence, requiring meeting two criteria to remove a government from office: an absolute majority of MKs and an agreement on an alternative candidate (a *formateur* who gets the opportunity to form a government). In 2014 this mechanism was strengthened when the Knesset adopted a full constructive vote of no-confidence. This type of no-confidence vote is quite rare; only seven countries, including Israel, have adopted it (Germany, Spain, Hungary, Slovenia, Poland, and Belgium are the others). In order to remove a government from office in such a vote the Knesset needs not only an absolute majority of MKs but also an agreement on an alternative government. The constructive vote of no-confidence is thus a dual majority vote rolled into one: it dismisses the incumbent government and simultaneously replaces it with a new one. Under these terms, it is now much more difficult for the Knesset to remove a government from office (Lento & Hazan, forthcoming).⁵

In summation, it can be said that the plenum is the lively public arena of the Knesset. It represents Israeli society quite well, but in its two main functions it does not fulfill its true potential and therefore it is quite ineffective, particularly when it comes to oversight.

THE COMMITTEE ARENA

Committees are the workhorses of any legislature. Parliamentary committees are created to help legislatures fulfill both their legislative and oversight functions more effectively, as certain roles of the legislature are performed better in a small and more personal arena. As US president Woodrow Wilson stated, “Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition, whilst Congress in its committee-rooms is Congress at work” (1885, p. 69). It is in the committees, rather than in the plenum, that more efficient and serious work is possible and a type of political horse-trading takes place: cross-party cooperation and the exchange of information (Hazan, 2001; Lees & Shaw, 1979; Martin, 2014; Mattson & Strøm, 1995). The committee’s two most important functions are in-depth discussion of legislation and cross-party oversight of administrative activities (Lees & Shaw, 1979).

The Israeli committee system is composed of twelve permanent committees, which perform both main functions: they prepare all legislation for the plenum, and they are the main arena for oversight of the government. They also deal with regulations that require their approval, with requests by citizens addressed to the Knesset or to the government, and with any matter the Knesset may decide to pass on to them for their treatment. They can also initiate discussions on a particular matter (Knesset Rules of Procedure). The Knesset plenum or the House Committee may decide to set up joint committees made up of an equal number of members from two committees and having the status of a special committee for a particular matter. Apart from the permanent committees, there are several special committees that can function in a similar manner to the permanent committees but are set up for specific issues and have limited terms of office. Another type of committee is a parliamentary inquiry committee, which is appointed by the plenum to deal with particular issues viewed by the Knesset as having special national importance. Finally, the Ethics Committee is a special committee responsible for MKs who have violated the Knesset’s rules of ethics or who have been involved in inappropriate activity outside of the Knesset.

The Knesset is one of the smallest unicameral parliaments in the democratic world, while the coalition governments in Israel are relatively large (around thirty ministers and deputy ministers). Consequently, around ninety MKs are left to serve on the committees (ministers and deputy ministers are not allowed to serve on committees). The total number of committee positions is more than double the number of available MKs. Many MKs thus need to serve on more than one or two committees. Furthermore, since the coalition majority must be maintained within each committee, and the executive

positions are filled only from its ranks, MKs from the coalition parties end up serving on as many as five or six committees. Moreover, all of the committees meet at the same time, and thus the attendance of committee members is meager. Additionally, there is no correspondence between committee jurisdictions and government ministries, so the committees oversee too many (and often different) fields of governmental activity. When MKs serve on several committees simultaneously and need to skip from one discussion to another—and these can either overlap or be vastly different—they have neither the time nor the ability to study the issues properly, prepare themselves for discussions, or become professional in their committee work.

The committees enter the legislative process at a very early stage and have the right to remove bills that have passed the preliminary and/or first readings from the Knesset's agenda by a vote (plurality). Committees can also postpone discussions on bills or even "bury" them. While preparing the bills for second and third readings, they are allowed to—and they often do—amend them significantly. It is the committee's version of all bills that returns to the plenary for a final vote. Finally, they are allowed to initiate bills, or amendments to bills, in specific matters such as Basic Laws, elections, MKs, and so on.

The Israeli committee system is considered quite strong, at least formally. However, the governing coalition controls almost all the committee chairs, and the parties can change or remove their committee members at will. These two structural parameters impair the institutional strength of the committees, since they will be less autonomous if they are controlled mainly by coalition chairpersons and by the coalition majority, and thus their members are not completely free to oppose government legislation or to oversee the government.

Although committees have the authority to compel witnesses to appear before them, they cannot impose significant sanctions against those who have been summoned but do not appear or who present false information. This authority is therefore more formal than practical. Moreover, committee chairs, who control the committees' agendas, often do not carry out follow-up debates regarding the implementation of their committees' own recommendations. Follow-up activity represents the final link in the oversight chain. Not having follow-up debates means that the oversight process is incomplete and implies that oversight is not a priority. Since 2000, the establishment of the Parliamentary Research and Information Center and the addition of legal advisers to the committees' professional staff, have improved the ability of the committees to oversee the executive branch. Nevertheless, the scale of this help, important as it may be, is still not enough to overcome both structural and political obstacles.

Empirical analysis shows that the Knesset committees are involved mostly in legislation, probably because they have been granted more significant powers in this area and this activity does not require particular effort, resources, or expertise. It is also a high-profile activity that draws public and media attention. Oversight, on the other hand, is considered a strenuous, prolonged activity, and MKs feel that they will gain little from it in a practical sense. Therefore, it is not prudent, from their perspective, to invest time and resources in such a thankless and ineffectual activity. When we add to this the struc-

tural, legal, procedural, and personal limitations mentioned previously, we soon discover that little proper or in-depth oversight can be executed in the committee arena.

Therefore, the overall picture is quite complex. While the Israeli committee system demonstrates some strengths in its legislative role, in its oversight role it is rather weak and inefficient (Friedberg & Hazan, 2009b; Hazan, 2001). This complex picture becomes even more complicated when relations among the three branches are assessed.

CONTEMPORARY LEGISLATIVE–EXECUTIVE– JUDICIAL RELATIONS

The lack of a written constitution, together with parliamentary sovereignty, creates a rather hierarchical relationship among the three branches of government in Israel. The legislature dominates *prima facie*, since it can pass laws affecting the powers and jurisdiction of the other two branches. However, several laws passed by the Knesset have actually curtailed legislative dominance.

As in the definition of parliamentary democracy, the government emerges from and is responsible to the legislature (Lijphart, 1984; Sartori, 1997). In Israel, a government must pass a vote of investiture in order to assume power. In other words, governments require the active support of the Knesset, thus empowering it, giving the executive less supremacy, and creating more of a balance of power between these two branches. This is even more the case because the Knesset is very fragmented—there are no parties at or near a majority—making multiparty coalitions the norm. Executive restraint in Israel can thus be exercised not only by the Knesset institutionally, but also by the parties politically.

However, different types of government termination procedures also influence the balance of power among the branches. The ultimate power of the legislature rests with its ability to unseat the government in a vote of no-confidence. The constructive vote of no-confidence—which requires an absolute majority and an alternative government—reduces the power of the legislature, because while a majority might oppose the government, it might not be able to unite around an alternative. In other words, the need for a cohesive majority in order to bring down a government leads to executive dominance over the legislative branch. In addition, as of 2015 Israel has the strictest form of the constructive vote of no-confidence, requiring not only a majority and an alternative government but also a complete set of government ministers and policy guidelines (Lento & Hazan, forthcoming).

The judicial branch in Israel was traditionally only ancillary to the developing balance of power between the executive and legislative branches. The principle of legislative supremacy limited the jurisdiction of the court, because it had no right to question the legislation produced by the Knesset. The judiciary even accepted the ability of a majority in the Knesset to pass anything it wanted. However, through several court decisions over time, from the landmark decision of 1969 to that of 1995 (the former established the

principle of judicial review, while the latter expanded this power; see the chapter by Hofnung and Wattad on the judicial branch in this volume), the Israeli Supreme Court slowly established the supremacy of the Basic Laws over ordinary laws, thereby providing the court with the powers of judicial review. The language in the two new Basic Laws passed in 1992, which statutorily safeguarded individual rights and required all other laws to comply, allowed the chief justice of the Supreme Court to proclaim a “constitutional” revolution.

Interbranch relations in Israel, based on only a partial constitutional framework, are still evolving. Questions of how a “constitutional” government is to be defined (see the chapter by Mahler on the constitutional system and parliamentary government in this volume) and when the judiciary can legitimately intervene in politics continue to divide the country, such as the decisions of the judicial branch concerning the application of Israeli law beyond the 1967 borders to areas administered by the military. That is, a new balance is developing among the branches; the executive is now more stable than before and the judiciary has clearly become a more active player. This developing relationship has resulted in a problematic stalemate, hampered by political considerations. For example, the Knesset has decided (politically) not to decide on many critical ideological issues, which are then brought to the court—often by MKs themselves—eliciting a decision that is then criticized by the government (Dotan & Hofnung, 2005). This shifting of some important decisions to the court not only alters the balance of power among the three branches of government in Israel but also questions the legitimacy of decision-making in general, and by the Knesset in particular. A counterreaction by the Knesset in the form of legislation introduced to create a new Constitutional Court that would be in charge of judicial review, or the right to relegislate a law after it has been struck down by the Supreme Court, has become part of the fabric of contested relations among the branches of government in Israel.

As the long struggle for a written constitution continues, a new balance is developing between the executive and legislature on the one side, and the judiciary on the other. To avoid constant confrontation, all three branches of government are reassessing their roles. What is clear is that the current state of legislative–executive–judicial relations in Israeli politics is a dramatic departure from the earlier phase of legislative supremacy.

OPPOSITION

Nongoverning parties in parliamentary democracies can be divided according to two dimensions: size and influence. The first distinguishes between a large and united opposition and a small and fragmented one. The second dimension contrasts an opposition that plays a significant role in the legislative process to one that has little influence on the government. The Israeli opposition appears to constitute the worst of both worlds: it is small, divided, and weak.

Since Israeli governments tend to be oversized (see the chapter by Kenig on the executive branch in this volume), oppositions tend to be undersized. On average, the Israeli

opposition makes up 37 percent of the seats in the Knesset (Tuttnauer, 2013). Moreover, it is comprised of multiple parties, and since the 1990s there has also been a decline in the ideological unity of the opposition—at times even a bilateral opposition. Parties now prefer to cooperate and enjoy the benefits of membership in the governing coalition, rather than to serve the people from the opposition and present a viable alternative. This is not unique—indeed, it is quite in line with what we see in other multiparty parliamentary democracies—and can be described as the professionalization of politics according to the cartel party theory (Katz & Mair, 1995).

The weakness of the opposition in the Knesset has political and institutional causes. Politically, Israel has an extremely fragmented party system (see the chapter by Shugart on the electoral system in this volume, especially the discussion on the “effective” number of parties), coupled with a desire to form more than minimum-winning coalitions, and also grand coalitions, plus opposition parties that have never been in government and are unlikely ever to be—a perennial opposition. The result is that almost all parties but the most extreme ones have “coalition potential” for most of the possible governing combinations. Institutionally, in its attempts to strengthen the government the Knesset has seen an erosion of the parliamentary tools available to the opposition. Two of the more recent tools that have strengthened the government at the expense of the opposition are the constructive vote of no-confidence and biannual budgets. At the same time, an ongoing tool that persists in a rather weak state is the committee system in its oversight function.

Under such circumstances, the opposition in the Israeli Knesset is divided between those parties who are temporarily out of power and seek to enter government rather than oppose it and the perennial opposition that adopts populist or even “anti-system” positions because these parties realize that there is little chance they will ever take part in governing (i.e., the Arab parties). A weak and divided opposition allows the government to be less sensitive and less accountable to the general public, while the opposition cannot unite to oversee the government in power or to challenge it and present itself to the voters as an alternative in the elections.

CONCLUSION

While the Israeli Knesset has functioned for almost seventy-five years, it is still in the process of becoming an institutionalized and structured legislative body. Thus far it has performed with no constitutional restraints or checks and balances, from an era of one-party dominance, to one of alternation between two major coalition blocs, to the more recent period of extreme fragmentation and personalization, based on one of the most proportional electoral methods in existence. All of these factors have influenced the status and functioning of the legislative branch and its developing relations with the other branches.

Indeed, the Knesset is the source of all political power in Israel. However, it has too many parties, none of them large (after several of the last elections, the largest party was

just above or even below 25 percent of the seats in the Knesset; it was a minority within the governing majority that it led). The Knesset does not function well in terms of legislation. Although it is quite powerful in that respect, it is encumbered by too much private legislation. The Knesset functions poorly concerning oversight, in both the plenum and the committee arena.

In recent years even the representative role of the Knesset as the main platform for debating public and national controversies has eroded. The political leaders themselves often choose to delineate their vision not in the Knesset plenum—the natural location to do so—but rather in other places such as “prestige” forums (the Herzliya or the Institute for National Security Studies conferences) and even the US Congress, where they capture the spotlight and are treated with deference.

When the parties began to embrace primaries in the early 1990s, the Knesset as a collective body was undermined as individual MKs gained power. When Israel attempted electoral reform in the mid-1990s, directly electing the prime minister, the Knesset was emptied of some of its government-formation attributes, and its government-termination powers were weakened. This electoral reform was quickly annulled, but recent structural changes have weakened the Knesset further. With the advent of judicial activism, the Knesset was challenged by a shift in decision-making powers. The extensive periods of one party dominating the government, Mapai for the first thirty years and Likud for the more recent period, have created a government that is all too stable and an opposition that is both weak and fragmented. The Knesset also suffers from public distrust; according to every survey, trust in the Knesset is at its lowest point ever, and its status (together with the parties) is lower than any other governmental institution in Israel. These developments and their political consequences have impaired the Knesset, stripping power from it in the form of detachment from the executive and incursion by the judiciary. The Knesset might look strong on paper but is relatively weak in practice. Paradoxically, the Knesset has become more active when its power seems to be in decline.

In summation, the Knesset as an institution has seen its strength erode, with increasingly fragmented and individualistic politics. While there is a new and different type of legislative constraint on the executive, it is increasingly being challenged by the judiciary, it is unable to create a viable opposition to oversee the government, and lately it has generated a constellation that is less predictable and controllable. In a country in which the consolidation of democracy is an ongoing process, in a region where democracy can be used as a liability, such developments cannot be perceived as conducive to systemic stability.

NOTES

1. The term for a parliamentary party group that is used in Israel is “faction” (*siaa*), not “party.”
2. There is a limit to the number of private member bills that can be raised for preliminary deliberation in the Knesset plenum, but on the one hand this does not refer to the tabling

of bills, and on the other hand there are many exceptions to this limit, making the number quite high in practice.

3. An MK may request that his or her motion be approved as urgent, and the Knesset Presidium will decide whether to approve it as such. The Presidium includes the speaker of the Knesset and his or her deputies (seven to nine representing most of the parties). It determines the plenum's agenda and approves questions, motions for the agenda, and private member bills for tabling.
4. The Secretariat is made up of legislative officials, not MKs, and it coordinates the plenum's agenda (votes of no-confidence, motions for the agenda, questions, bills, etc.) with the parties, the committees, the government, and the ministries. It also monitors parliamentary procedures.
5. During the twentieth Knesset the number of no-confidence motions that could be raised was limited; in exchange the opposition was granted the ability to address questions to the prime minister or to one of the ministers, as previously outlined.

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CHAPTER 18

THE JUDICIAL BRANCH IN ISRAEL

MENACHEM HOFNUNG AND
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WITH the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the British Mandate's legal system was adopted with very few changes.¹ One of the noticeable differences was the disappearance of British and Arab judges, who had comprised the majority of the judiciary. In a relatively short time the new state had to appoint new judges as well as to create a new Supreme Court.

Initially, in the wake of establishing the first Supreme Court, Israel's first government did not perceive the judiciary as an independent branch. To a great extent the executive branch regarded the court as its long arm. The first justices were appointed under political scrutiny, taking into consideration their political views and affiliations (Brun, 2014; E. Rubinstein, 1980).

The government soon realized that this was not the way the judiciary perceived itself. The latter—particularly justices, who were largely affiliated with Mapai (the then ruling party)—proclaimed itself an independent branch. Evidence can be found in cases showing that the court struck down governmental decisions for being *ultra vires*: given without explicit authority by the law. The Supreme Court intervened in sensitive political matters by adhering to legal doctrines of administrative review as well as theories of legal interpretation (Lahav, 1990, p. 229; Shetreet, 1990, p. 607). By applying strict formal criteria in exercising statutory and administrative review, the court—sitting as the High Court of Justice (on the distinction between the Supreme Court of Appeals and the High Court of Justice, see below)—gradually established the basic standards of the rule of law, even with regard to security-related matters (Hofnung, 1996; Shetreet, 1994, pp. 61–78). In the 1970s and 1980s the court began applying more substantive criteria in reviewing administrative decisions.

This pattern of submitting major political and policy decisions to judicial scrutiny was enhanced in the 1990s following the enactment of the 1992 Basic Laws on human

rights—namely, Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation, and Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty. Politicians soon discovered that the balance of power had changed and that the court had become a veto player, capable of affecting the outcome of major policy decisions. Since the mid-1990s legislative initiatives have frequently called for limiting the court's power of judicial review or for changing the method of appointing justices to the court.

With this perspective in mind, this chapter asks whether the Israeli judiciary truly constitutes a third independent branch of government. This is relevant because there have been continuous attempts to change the existing balance of power, aimed at limiting the court's power to apply judicial doctrines and legal standards to executive and legislative decisions.

CONSTITUTIONAL POLITICS IN MODERN DEMOCRACIES

In modern democracies, it is commonly accepted that the judiciary forms one of the government's three branches. The court's authority to review the executive's action and the laws passed by the legislature lies in the function of judicial review—that is, the power to review and negate actions of the other two branches. What exactly the limits of judicial power are is still highly debatable and varies from country to country.

Since the late 1940s European, Asian, and Latin American nations have established constitutional courts and equipped them with review powers, authorizing the courts to assess the constitutionality of laws, regulations, or other official actions. While initially courts tended to stay away from what has been regarded as a “political question” (Tushnet, 2002), the trend since the late 1970s has been to apply greater judicial review to all government actions. The increasing judicial involvement in political and policy-making processes and the rise of the global expansion of judicial power have led to what is called the “judicialization of politics” (Epstein, Knight, & Shvetsova, 2001; Sieder, Schjolden, & Angell, 2005; Stone, 2000; Tate & Vallinder, 1995) and even the “judicialization of mega-politics” (Hirschl, 2008). “Judicialization” implies the transfer of decision-making powers from the legislature, the cabinet, or the civil service to the courts, as well as the expansion of judicial decision-making methods to other branches of government (Tate & Vallinder, 1995, p. 13). Questions that were perceived during most of the twentieth century as purely political—such as the secular nature of Turkey's political system; the transition to democracy in South Africa; the right of elected leaders to assume office in Pakistan, Venezuela, Brazil, Italy, Egypt, and Thailand; Israel's identity as a “Jewish and democratic state”; the future of the Canadian federation; and the validity of the UK referendum to leave the European Union—can now be conceived of as constitutional matters (Hirschl, 2008). All these questions were raised, debated, and decided by courts. This new trend of judicial expansion not only is tied to the willing-

ness of judges to exert power, but also is related to a greater public awareness; growing demand for accountability; and the tendency of politicians, lawyers, and human rights activists to seek hospitable arenas in which to raise and debate political demands that have been either rejected or not met in the traditional channels of the government's decision-making processes.

Courts can affect policy outcomes in several ways. First, they may veto legislative initiatives, with a crucial, long-term impact on major areas of policymaking. Second, they can act as guardians of constitutional rights, since opposition parties, lawyers, citizen groups, and others realize that rights claims are an effective avenue of social change. Third, they can affect policymaking by applying powers of statutory interpretation and judicial administrative review. Finally, by declaring legislative and administrative acts unconstitutional, they can force legislators to enter into a constitutional dialogue with the courts. The courts thus force policymakers to present and seriously consider constitutional arguments, as well as to cast and recast statutory language in light of potential constitutional objections to proposed legislation (Shapiro & Stone, 1994).

The growing involvement of courts in national politics has initialized a counteraction, pursuant to which several countries have raised initiatives to restrain the power of the judiciary and allow elected representatives to act under minimal checks and balances in creating and applying legal norms. Russia, Hungary, and Turkey are recent examples of this trend (Scheppele, 2015; Shambayati & Sütçü, 2012).

CONSTITUTIONAL POLITICS IN ISRAEL

When the State of Israel was established in May 1948, its Declaration of Independence contained an explicit promise to draft a written constitution no later than October 1, 1948. The declaration empowered the Constituent Assembly to be elected in the summer of 1948 (see the chapter in this volume by Friedberg & Hazan on the legislative branch) to draft and enact a constitution. As war broke out and the date of the elections was delayed (elections were eventually held in January 1949), the provisional government soon discovered that maintaining the legal status quo carried with it numerous advantages. There were no legal restraints on political decisions, and every policy that won a majority within the Provisional State Council (from February 1949, the Knesset) could be carried out swiftly, without any delay.

Immediately after the 1949 elections the newly elected Constituent Assembly, in its first legislative act, the Transition Law of 1949, changed its name to the "Knesset." After debating the matter of the constitution for another year, a compromise was reached, and the Knesset adopted the Harrari Resolution, which states:

The constitution shall be composed of individual chapters, in such a manner that each of them shall constitute a basic law in itself. The individual chapters shall be

brought before the Knesset [...] and all the chapters together will form the State Constitution. (5 D.K. 1743 [1950])

During the first twenty years of its existence, the Supreme Court accepted the traditional British governing model, in which the legislature in its legislative capacity is immune from judicial review.² An example of that judicial restraint can be found in the *Batzul* case (HCJ 188/63), in which the court faced the question of whether it could declare a law invalid because it contained a factual error. The court stated clearly that once a law has been passed and published, it cannot be subject to judicial review. The court can only interpret the provisions of the law, nothing further. This firm and narrow interpretation of the concept of judicial power was reexamined in 1969 when the court decided in the *Bergman* case that a law that had provisions contrary to explicit stipulations in a Basic Law can be invalidated (HCJ 98/69). This narrow opening of judicial review of primary legislation has proven to be more significant than it initially appeared, since it served as a sign that when the right case comes up the court is more willing than before to look into petitions challenging actions of the government's elected branches.

Between 1950 and 1992 the Knesset adopted nine Basic Laws, mainly covering the powers invested in the branches of government. Following severe political crisis in 1990 and facing a legitimacy challenge and massive protests calling to clean Israeli politics of corruption and paralysis, the Knesset enacted three new Basic Laws in early 1992; two of these (Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty and Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation)³ granted the court expanded powers of judicial review on primary legislation and other specific political matters. These powers include the ability to review whether the new legislation violates rights protected in the Basic Laws, such as the rights of human dignity, life, property, and freedom of occupation (Barak, 1992; Barak-Erez, 1995). Nonetheless, the Basic Laws do not accord explicit protection to all utopian fundamental rights. Over the years, especially and particularly following the adoption of the new Basic Laws in 1992, as well as since the ruling in the *Hamizrahi Bank* case in 1995,⁴ the court has enshrined some of the unprotected fundamental rights—such as freedom of expression and the right to equality—within the right to dignity.

In the *Hamizrahi Bank* case, several financial institutions appealed to the Supreme Court to challenge a new Knesset law regarding legal arrangements for agricultural settlements in Israel that owed their creditors hundreds of millions of shekels. The appeals centered on an amendment to an existing law, which granted the agricultural sector protection against legal remedies that otherwise could have been taken by the creditors. The creditors contended that the law was unconstitutional, in that it violated their property rights as specifically anchored in § 3 of Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty of 1992. In deciding the appeals, the Supreme Court addressed the questions of whether or not the Knesset possessed constituent power to frame a constitution and thereby limit its own legislative authority and whether the Basic Laws enacted by the Knesset enjoy supral legislative status. Each of the nine judges wrote a separate opinion, but the court unanimously held that although the law violated the property rights of creditors, its provisions were consistent with the requirements of Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty.

The decision of the court was based on the understanding that the Basic Laws were part of the future Israeli constitution, resulting from the court's interpretation of the Harrari Resolution, and that therefore these rights have to be considered constitutional norms, according to which the court will rule in case of a conflict with other ordinary acts. Israel's Basic Laws were indeed adopted in an atmosphere that was intended to formulate supralegal constitutional norms, and they certainly include elements characteristic of constitutions (Inbar, 2001). As such, the court, through its rulings, elevated these Basic Laws to a supreme normative status superseding that of other laws, called "ordinary laws." Accordingly, when a legal norm in a Basic Law conflicts with another in an ordinary law, the first will prevail and the latter yield (A. Rubinstein & Medina, 2005).

In extending its protection to individual human rights expressly protected by the Basic Laws, as well as to other unlisted rights, the court's power of judicial review has been grounded on the supralegal constitutional authority vested in it by § 15(c) of Basic Law: The Judiciary—especially following the ruling in the *Hamizrahi Bank* case. According to § 15(c), the court has the explicit judicial power to issue decrees directed against the executive and the legislative branches. Given this power, read together with the provisions of Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, it has been established that it is the court's inherent authority to decide on the constitutionality of legislative acts. A normative anchor for this understanding of the court's power is enshrined in article 11 of the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, deemed the supremacy clause, whereby all governmental branches, including the legislature, must respect the rights protected by the Basic Law.

The ruling in the *Hamizrahi Bank* case further strengthened the authority of the court to review not only the legality but also the constitutionality of laws. A chief aspect of this latter authority is that it enables the court to fulfill its mandate to maintain the rule of law (A. Rubinstein & Medina, 2005). Ultimately the primary function of the court is to instill democratic values in society and enforce the rule of law, primarily on the governmental authorities, where the legitimacy of the constitution and the Basic Laws grant legitimacy to the judicial review process.

Another key aspect of the legitimacy of the court's authority to review the constitutionality of laws is the implementation of the fundamental constitutional principle concerning the separation of powers, in the substantive sense of that principle—that is, in the sense of the implementation of checks and balances.⁵ This is true a fortiori, given that the Basic Laws were accorded constitutional supralegal normative status, particularly following the decision in the *Hamizrahi Bank* case. That judgment laid out clear rules concerning not only the normative status of the Basic Laws but also the normative mechanism involved in implementing them, including amendments and violations of rights protected by the laws, and examined the nature of formally entrenched Basic Laws and others, which are substantively entrenched.

Prior to the revolution that resulted from the ruling in the *Hamizrahi Bank* case, the court had developed a whole set of rules of self-restraint, whereby the court rejected out of hand petitions brought before it based on various doctrines, such as delay in submitting the petition, approaching the court with bad faith, and the absence of standing of the particular petitioner.

Insofar as the right to access the court is concerned—which reflects on the scope of judicial power—alongside the judgment in the *Hamizrahi Bank* case, the court has developed a coherent, lenient approach toward petitions. Whereas in the past unjustified delay in submitting a petition following the infringement of a constitutional right led to rejection of the petition out of hand, this has not been the case since the decision in *Hamizrahi Bank*. Instead, the court has examined the substantive outcome of such delay, and even more so the legal remedies available due to the delay. In certain instances, the court has disregarded the delay issue, especially in cases in which severe violation of the rule of law was at stake.

In addition, and similarly, in regard to the doctrine of bad faith (*mala fide*), following the *Hamizrahi Bank* decision, the court would at most criticize a petitioner for his or her arguably improper behavior, yet avoid rejecting the petition solely on these premises, particularly in cases that involved an important constitutional and/or public matter.

In the same vein, the question of standing has not created an obstacle in submitting constitutional matters for the court's determination. In this regard, the question has not been the presence of a direct and substantial interest for the particular petitioner who is standing before the court, but rather the existence of an important constitutional question of significant public concern (A. Rubinstein & Medina, 2005).⁶ It is due to this judicial perception that nongovernmental organizations and other public petitioners have access to the court. It is thus this perception that results in significant constitutional issues being brought for determination before the court, even in the absence of a concert *lis* (dispute). And it is especially in accordance with this understanding that the *amici curiae* (friends of the court) are present in the courtroom to elaborate on the discussed constitutional matters, voicing their professional opinion and allowing for fruitful discussion of the law and the rule of law.⁷

In addition to the above-mentioned premises for judicial review, the doctrine of justiciability, adopted by the court, has been an important anchor for developing an active process of judicial review. According to this doctrine, the law does not include black holes; that is, there is no legal dispute whatsoever that cannot be normatively resolved. Every case is normatively justiciable, yet not every case is institutionally justiciable. There are cases, such as pure economic, political, and diplomatic matters for which it is more proper that they be resolved by the legislature rather than the judiciary (Friedmann, 2013).

That said, it should be noted that in practice there have been very few instances when the court has actually intervened in the sense of invalidating legislation for being unconstitutional. Even then, the judiciary has “felt” compelled to justify and to thoroughly reason its ruling. Decisions of the court have become hundreds of pages long, including detailed explanations of the judicial methodology and further references to comparative law and legal academic literature, in support of the various stages of the development and application of judicial discretion.

Notably, the court has persistently avoided a direct clash with the legislature by referring to various doctrines of judicial power that establish a dialogue between the judiciary and the legislature. In cases where this was possible, the court has provided

alternative constitutional remedies to promptly striking down the whole legislation as being unconstitutional; it has also deferred the invalidation of such legislation, thus allowing for possible amendment of unconstitutional laws. Other remedies include partial invalidation, whenever possible invalidating the particular unconstitutional provision instead of the entire legislation.⁸

In the past decade a vast majority of justices, led by Chief Justice (Ret.) Asher Grunis, have adopted the American ripeness doctrine. According to this doctrine, in the absence of a purely legal constitutional question, the court shall not determine the constitutionality of particular legislation unless it has first been applied by the assigned minister and/or governmental high-ranking official.⁹ By adhering to this doctrine the court apparently has stepped back to the era prior to the *Hamizrahi Bank* ruling, thus restraining its power of judicial review to the level of the executive. However, such an approach is not free of doubts, particularly because in all cases where this doctrine has been applied, although the court avoided invalidating the legislation at stake, very long decisions were drafted and clear instructions were given on how such legislation should be applied in a constitutional manner if judicial review were to be avoided. Ultimately the power to decide which cases are ripe and which are not—that is, which are ready for judicial review and which are not—has remained in the hands of the court, as a question of judicial discretion.

JUDICIAL POLITICS

In 1948 the provisional government of the State of Israel decided to keep the former British mandatory model, in which the court acts in two capacities. In its first capacity, the Supreme Court sits as a supreme appellate court, hearing appeals of judicial decisions of lower courts, mainly of decisions by the six district courts in civil and criminal matters. In its second capacity, the Supreme Court also sits as the High Court of Justice. Acting as this court, it serves as a first and last instance tribunal on constitutional and administrative matters directed against government ministries, agencies, and other public authorities.

During the first five years of statehood, judges were appointed by the executive (Brun, 2014; E. Rubinstein, 1980). The enactment of the Judges Act in 1953 formally anchored the principle of judicial independence and altered the method by which judges are appointed to the bench, transferring this power from the government to the president of the state, who formally exercises his or her power by virtue of a recommendation brought forward by a special committee. The latter is composed of nine members representing four constituencies and is headed by the minister of justice. The committee also includes a member of the cabinet, two members of the legislature, three members of the judiciary—including the chief justice of the Supreme Court—and two members of the bar. An amendment to the law in 2014 requires each of the four authorities represented on the committee to nominate at least one female member.¹⁰

Remarkably, until the 1990s appointing a judge to the Supreme Court was not of great public concern. Since then the situation has changed drastically. With the changing nature of general election results, due to competitive elections and shaky coalitions in the 1980s (see the chapter in this volume by Hazan on the parties and the party system), the court was frequently asked to intervene in political decisions. Over a period of several years, petitions to the High Court of Justice became a common tool for the parliamentary opposition and for civil society to have a voice in the formation of public policy (Dotan & Hofnung, 2005). This trend was enhanced following the enactment of the 1992 Basic Laws on human rights and the consequent 1995 *Hamizrahi Bank* decision, in which the court interpreted these Basic Laws as granting the judiciary the power of judicial review. The legitimacy of the Supreme Court's power of judicial review quickly became a matter of heated debate in Israeli politics. Since the mid-1990s the process of appointing justices to the court has been subject to very strict public and political scrutiny. One of the significant effects of the 1992 constitutional reform has been the evolution of a constitutional dialogue whereby the courts can affect future legislation and review administrative decisions on new grounds specified in the Basic Laws. Although the Supreme Court has invalidated only a handful of laws since 1992, it has proven capable of changing the nature of legislative dialogue. Legislators and policymakers now debate not only what is good or bad policy, but also what has the best chance to survive judicial scrutiny. Technical constitutional arguments are made, debated, and countered by other constitutional arguments on the floor of the Knesset and in cabinet meetings.

The consequent attacks on the Supreme Court have centered around five main legislative strategies:

- 1) Changing the selection criteria and assuring that the judiciary will be more representative than it currently is.
- 2) Installing a Constitutional Court—selected using a mixed professional/representative formula¹¹—above the Supreme Court to decide constitutional matters.
- 3) If demands 1 and 2 are not met, achieving greater diversity of the judiciary by amending the composition of the Judicial Appointing Committee to include more politicians.¹²
- 4) Adding another component to the existing selection process, a public hearing for Supreme Court candidates before the Knesset's Constitutional, Law and Justice Committee, which would have the right to disqualify a candidate from serving on the Supreme Court.¹³
- 5) Limiting the powers of the court by direct legislation.¹⁴

The guiding rationale behind all five initiatives is the same: to bring back the old balance of powers and allow the government's elected branches to operate freely with minimal intervention from the Supreme Court. These legislative initiatives are based on the claim that the Supreme Court is a major veto player with a defined political agenda that favors the liberal-left parties. The facts that the composition of the judiciary has

significantly changed since the constitutional revolution of 1992, and that the court is now much less active, matter little. Reacting to the political challenge to its independence, the judiciary has adopted its own tactics of avoiding clear decisions in sensitive cases (such as delaying decisions in difficult cases or pressuring the litigants to agree to an out-of-court settlement). This is done in an attempt to preserve the court's power base, protecting both the formal powers of the judiciary and the existing method of judicial selection.

Although decisions declaring laws unconstitutional or abolishing administrative measures can still be found, it should be noted that the repeated objections to the court's intervention in policy decisions are not necessarily tied to actual rulings but rather to political developments. The tactic of politicians running "against the Court" has a political reasoning that is related to the changing composition of Israeli governments. The dominant political power of the left-leaning Labor Party, the major party in the first thirty years of Israel's existence, has gradually weakened, to the point that after the elections of 2020 it is represented by only three members of Knesset (compared to the Likud's 36 members) and no longer constitutes a viable opposition. With the exception of a twenty-month period (July 1999–March 2000), since 1996 Israeli governments have been led by either Likud or former Likud prime ministers (2005–2009). Court rulings questioning practices and policies in the West Bank and Gaza, which right-wing governments support, or judicial decisions handed down against religious institutions, whose parties are the key partners in most right-wing governments, were portrayed as ideologically motivated by a hostile, secular, left-leaning court. Calls to change the balance of power and allow elected politicians to act under less scrutiny from appointed judges soon followed. While in the past turning to the court was a weapon of the weak (Dotan & Hofnung, 2005), and each party could find itself in the parliamentary opposition, this has not been the case during the last two decades. Liberal left-wing parties regularly occupy the opposition benches and consequently petition the court with greater frequency.

POLITICS AND THE JUDICIARY DURING THE POLITICAL CRISIS OF 2019–2020

Campaigning against the judiciary intensified after the general elections of 2015 and became the norm during the three successive electoral campaigns in 2019–2020. After winning the 2015 elections, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was able to nominate to two key positions persons who were believed to be personally loyal to him. In September 2015, Roni Alsheikh was nominated as general commissioner of the Israel Police, and in early 2016, Avichai Mandelblit, who until that time had served as the cabinet secretary (a personal nomination of the prime minister), was nominated as the attorney general of Israel. Soon after the nomination of Alsheikh and Mandelblit, it was discovered that the

Israeli Police was carrying out an investigation against Netanyahu on several corruption affairs, involving allegations of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust. The two new appointees did not stop the investigations that eventually led to a court indictment on several criminal charges, and Netanyahu's trial started on May 24, 2020 (Criminal Case 67104-01-20 *State of Israel v. Netanyahu* in the District Court of Jerusalem).

During his two previous terms as prime minister (2009–2013 and 2013–2015), Netanyahu had maintained good relations with the judiciary. This changed when the investigation into Netanyahu's personal dealings gained momentum. Frequent personal attacks from the prime minister and from ministers of the Likud Party were often directed at the law enforcement agencies handling the prime minister's legal case. It started with attacks on the general commissioner of the police who was labeled as "leftist" and his nomination was not renewed in 2018 (*Haaretz*, December 2, 2018). Then attacks then shifted to the State's General Prosecutor who was reviewing the case, and then to the attorney general who signed the indictment and sent it to the court just before the last of the three general elections of 2019–2020.¹⁵ These series of attacks reached their peak just minutes before the opening session of Netanyahu's criminal trial. On the first day of the trial, Netanyahu delivered a very aggressive speech against the law enforcement agencies. Standing before a podium, just a few steps from the courtroom, with seven cabinet ministers from the Likud Party wearing coronavirus masks standing behind him, Netanyahu launched personal attacks against the police, the state's prosecution, and the attorney general, accusing them of fabricating charges and conspiring with leftist journalists aiming to destroy him personally and to bring an end to the right-wing government (*Haaretz*, May 25, 2020).

The entire legal affair of the prime minister stood at the center of the three successive elections, with public opinion almost evenly divided between those who believed that the entire legal system including the judiciary was set to throw out a popular and innocent prime minister and those who believed that Netanyahu was a corrupt politician who used his position for his personal benefit.

During the three electoral campaigns of 2019–2020, the judiciary and especially the High Court of Justice were at the center of the political debate. On the surface, the debate was on the subject of "who has the final word in policy matters," the elected officials or the Supreme Court. In reality, both sides were eyeing the legal affairs of Netanyahu and their impact on the ensuing elections. In the elections of April 2019, the party of the serving minister of justice, Ayelet Shaked, failed to win any Knesset representation. Netanyahu then nominated a new justice minister to the interim government, Amir Ohana. On the day that he was sworn in, Ohana said in a television interview that not all judicial decisions must be obeyed (*Ynet*, June 13, 2019), and in the coming months he had occasional quarrels with key office holders in the judicial system. The thirteen months covering the three election cycles of 2019–2020 were filled with political–legal petitions debated on the floor of the High Court of Justice. On the one hand, there were petitions seeking a court ruling barring Netanyahu from serving as prime minister. On the other hand, there were petitions trying to stop or delay Netanyahu's upcoming trial.

After the general elections of March 2020, a new coalition government was formed. Blue and White, a party that ran neck and neck with Likud in three successive

campaigns, split into two factions, with the majority faction joining the Likud as an equal partner in a national unity government. Blue and White was able to secure a rotation with Likud in the position of prime minister during the term of the twenty-third Knesset, as well as control of the three so-called democracy ministries, namely, justice, communications, and culture. The entire complicated coalition agreement, including proposed amendments to the Basic Law and the question of the compatibility of an indicted member of the Knesset (Netanyahu) to be granted the mandate to form a government, came before an enlarged panel of eleven judges of the High Court of Justice. After holding a two-day session of live-broadcasted hearing, the court unanimously rejected the petitions, thus holding that there is no normative basis for the argument that a criminally indicted member of the Knesset may not be granted the mandate to form a government. Additionally, the court provided that the petitions against the legality of the coalition agreement are premature in principle, because they aim at challenging the constitutionality of laws that have not been legislated yet. The wording of the ruling can be interpreted as a hint to the petitioners that after the enactment of such laws, petitions can be submitted for judicial review. The court's decision should be assessed in light of the following considerations:

First, the court's sessions were held under clear and constant aggressive attacks against the court's self-legitimacy to discuss these petitions in the first place. In his written response to the petition, Netanyahu asserted that the court may not discuss these petitions; and if it does, said Netanyahu, such decision shall be perceived as illegitimate.

Second, the court reaffirmed its previous ruling of *Deri* and *Pinchasi*, in which it determined that when a charge of serious crimes is filed against a cabinet minister, the prime minister's authority to remove the minister from his ministry is mandatory (HCJ 3094/93, HCJ 4287/93). The Basic Law was later amended by adopting the HCJ ruling on this case (on the ruling applying a similar principle to elected city mayors, see also HCJ 4921/13).

Third, despite the above-mentioned precedents, the court held that nothing in existing laws supports the argument that a criminally indicted member of the Knesset (Netanyahu) may not be granted a mandate to form a new government.

To a great extent, the court's decision was widely perceived as surprising, particularly the unanimous position of the eleven justices in rejecting the petitions, despite the very obvious complexity of the legal questions at stake. Thus, the court's decision was viewed as a protective measure against the constant attacks on its self-legitimacy.

Having said that, it is worth highlighting the court's clear hints for preserving its power of judicial review, particularly in two regards:

First, as mentioned, the court emphasized its power of judicial review over the Knesset assembly's authority to grant the mandate to form a government, though in rare circumstances. In other words, the court did not intervene in this case, not because it did not have the power to do so but rather because it perceived this particular case as not justifying judicial intervention.

Second, although the court decided not to review the legality of the coalition agreement, it clearly manifested its dissatisfaction with several provisions in the agreement. Again, the court voiced bold hints by saying that only upon the enactment of the laws, which are mentioned in the agreement, can new petitions be submitted for judicial review.

These two points can be perceived as an expressive move of the judiciary, thus preserving its power of judicial review, not only in the matter of deciding on the particular case before it but also as a political player who can decide how and when to exercise its power.

CONCLUSION

In the first four decades of the State of Israel, elected officeholders viewed the court as a neutral and nonpolitical arbiter that could have helped unclog political deadlocks. Viewing the court from such a perspective, they were willing to turn a blind eye to its encroachment on the political realm or were even willing to grant the court additional powers (Hofnung, 1996). However, once such empowerment reached a point where the court became viewed as a veto player identified with liberal causes, the entire judiciary became the foci of attacks intended to annul, or at least weaken, the position of the court as an institution capable of intervening in the political process. In response to the mounting pressure to change the powers of the court and the composition of the judicial branch, the judiciary has responded with sophisticated political maneuvers that have enabled it thus far to resist the calls for structural reforms, allowing it to maintain the formal powers of the Supreme Court.

Although the formal authority of the court has remained intact, and at crucial junctures the Supreme Court can still function as a veto player, its ability to do so on a regular basis has diminished considerably since the early 1990s. In several cases in the last two decades the executive has simply opted not to comply with court orders (most such cases are related to court orders in the West Bank, thus raising little outcry within Israel itself).¹⁶ Therefore, in spite of its successful attempts to retain power, the Supreme Court has been tamed. An overall assessment of its judicial independence leads to the conclusion that the Supreme Court has maintained its impartiality and political relevance but is no longer insulated from political pressure that may affect the outcome of sensitive legal cases.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

1. The Law and Administration Ordinance, 1948.
2. HCJ 1/48, Kook v. Minister of Defence, Hmishpat 320 [1948]; HCJ 65/51 Jabontisky v. Weitzman 5 PD 801; HCJ 58/68 Shalit v. Minister of the Interior 23 PD 447 [1970].

3. Regarding the third Basic Law, the government changed the electoral system, and it is of less importance to the issues discussed in this chapter.
4. CA 6821/93 United Hamizrachi Bank Ltd. v. Migdal Cooperative Village, 49(4) PD 221 [1995].
5. HCJ 73/85 “Kach” Faction v. Speaker of the Knesset 39(3) PD 141 [1986]; HCJ 306/81 Plato-Sharon v. Knesset House Committee 35(4) PD 118 [1982]; HCJ 5364/94 Welner v. Chairman of the Israeli Labor Party 49(1) PD 758 [1995].
6. HCJ 910/86 Resler et al. v. the Minister of Defense, 42(2) PD 441; HCJ 651/03 the Association for Civil Rights in Israel v. Chair of the Central Elections Committee et al., 57(2) PD 62.
7. HCJ 1635/90 Zerzevsky v. the Prime Minister et al., 45(1) 749.
8. HCJ 2758/01 the Movement for Quality Government in Israel v. the Municipality of Jerusalem 58(4) PD 289.
9. HCJ 2311/11 Sabah et al. v. the Knesset et al (delivered on September 17, 2014); HCJ 3366/14 Gutman et al. v. the Attorney General—the State of Israel et al. (delivered on March 12, 2015); HCJ 5239/11 Avneri et al. v. the Knesset et al. (delivered on April 15, 2015).
10. At the end of 2019, it was discovered that the selection of judges to lower courts had been seriously circumvented by a political deal cut between the head of the Israeli Bar, Effi Nave, and the then minister of justice (2015–2019), Ayelet Shaked. Nave, who held the swing vote in the influential Committee for Judicial Selection, supported Shaked’s candidates for the Supreme Court, while Shaked supported Nave’s candidates for lower courts. Nave also helped recruit members to Shaked’s party, in order to support the minister in her own party’s internal candidate selection process. This was, therefore, another attempt at political intervention in the composition of the judicial branch. In December 2019, the state prosecution announced its intention to indict Nave on bribery charges related to the selection of judges to lower courts (*Jerusalem Post*, December 3, 2019).
11. See a bill presented to the Knesset by the incoming chair of the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, David Rotem, on April 1, 2009, P/18/4.
12. A bill submitted by then chair of the Knesset’s Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, Michael Eitan, *Ha’aretz*, Tuesday, March 25, 2003; and a proposal by then justice minister Daniel Friedmann. *Haaretz*, January 3, 2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/justice-minister-seeks-to-give-cabinet-greater-influence-in-choosing-supreme-court-justices-1.236441>.
13. Bill P/18/3423, submitted to the Knesset on July 25, 2011. The bill was proposed by two Likud members, the coalition chair, Ze’ev Elkin, and the chair of the Knesset House Committee, Yariv Levin. The latter of these two, Levin, was nominated in May 2020 to the influential position of Speaker of the Knesset.
14. In September 2008 the Israeli cabinet approved a bill that would curtail judicial review of legislation while enabling the Knesset to reinstate laws that the Supreme Court deemed unconstitutional. See *Haaretz*, September, 8, 2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/cabinet-approves-friedmann-s-legal-reforms-by-a-single-vote-1.253421>.
15. The formal indictment in court against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, available at <https://www.gov.il/he/departments/news/28-1-2020-01>.
16. For an English translation of the list compiled by attorney Yehudit Karp, former deputy attorney general, see <https://www.haaretz.com/former-official-bemoans-government-s-disregard-of-supreme-court-1.353406>. The list was published in *Haaretz*, April 1, 2011.

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CHAPTER 19

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM OF ISRAEL

MATTHEW S. SHUGART

THE electoral system of Israel is an extreme type among the world of democratic electoral systems, and an understanding of its unusual features is essential for understanding the country's politics. It is "extreme" in its proportionality because the entire Knesset (parliament) is elected in a single nationwide district of 120 seats. This essential feature of the system has been unchanged since 1949, while secondary features have been modified various times, with both changes in the specific seat-allocation formula and increases in the legal threshold required to obtain a seat. The system is also extreme in using for such a large district a "closed list" system, meaning parties nominate many candidates, but voters have no means to favor some candidates on a list over others.

In this chapter, after establishing the importance of the electoral system in general, I define several relevant concepts in more detail. Then I introduce some key tools for comparative analysis. The chapter compares the Israeli system and its outputs to the wider world of democratic electoral systems and explains how, from a comparative analytic perspective, we can understand how the electoral system shapes the country's politics. I also consider contextual factors that lead to some outcomes being "surprising" from the standpoint of comparative electoral systems scholarship.

ISRAEL'S ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND ITS POLITICS

An electoral system is the set of rules that determine how votes cast in an election are translated into seats in a representative assembly. Why should we care what a country's electoral system is? Specifically, what is there about Israeli politics for which knowledge of the electoral system might prove useful?

Even casual observers of the Israeli political scene will be aware that the country has a large number of political parties and is governed by coalitions that often consist of four, five, or even more parties. The country has a parliamentary system (with a brief partial exception). What this means is that the balance of parties in the Knesset determines who governs the country. Israel has a highly fragmented multiparty system; not only are there many parties, but rarely is one close to having a Knesset majority. In recent times the largest party often has had a quarter of the seats or less. Thus cooperation among parties is essential to form and maintain governments, which always are subject to the potential early termination of their mandate if they lose their parliamentary majority.

In the study of “party systems”—a term referring to the constellation of political parties in a country—two main schools of thought dominate. The societal view takes the political parties to be expressions of underlying social cleavages, implying that more fragmented societies result in more fragmented party systems.¹ The institutional view stipulates that the “rules of the game”—prominently the electoral system—shape the party system (Rae, 1967; Shugart & Taagepera, 2017, 2018). This school of thought states that more “proportional” electoral systems lead to more fragmented party systems. Many scholars believe societal and institutional factors jointly shape party systems.

Israeli society is fractured along several politically salient lines and has become more so over time due to *aliyah* (immigration) from different parts of the Jewish Diaspora (Stoll, 2013, pp. 127–38). Moreover, the single national district for Knesset elections makes for a highly proportional translation of votes into seats for the various parties (provided they clear the threshold). Thus Israel has almost the perfect combination of factors to produce fragmented multipartism: both societal diversity and an electoral system that is extremely “permissive” to the representation of small parties. As this chapter is devoted to the electoral system, the remainder of the discussion touches on societal factors only in passing. (See the chapters in the section on Israeli society in this volume.)

If we consider one of the most salient factors of Israeli politics to be its fragmented party system and its propensity to multiparty coalition governments, then the question for analysts of the electoral system is: How much does the extreme proportional electoral system explain the extreme multiparty system? Is the degree of partisan fragmentation about what we should expect, given its electoral system? Or is it less (or greater?) than we should expect? Such questions cannot be answered without having a set of concepts and tools of analysis; these are discussed in the following sections.

CONCEPTS IN ELECTORAL SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

By shaping a process that is so fundamental to any democracy—the distribution of political power in the central representative institution—the electoral system exerts influence on how the votes are cast. For instance, if the electoral system makes it difficult

for a given party to win representation (perhaps because it is too small or too regionally dispersed in support), such a party may cease to receive votes and perhaps even to exist. In this sense, the process of turning votes into seats becomes a process of turning parties' seat-winning prospects into votes (Shugart & Taagepera, 2017), especially in future elections as voters and other actors observe the underrepresentation of systematically disfavored parties. From this central insight is derived much of the comparative analysis of electoral systems and their effects on politics.

This chapter is concerned with elections to Israel's single national elected institution, the Knesset. Israel is a parliamentary democracy—aside from one brief period of a hybrid system in which the prime minister was directly elected.² For details on the Israeli executive, see the chapter by Kenig in this volume.

Of the components of electoral systems, those with the most impact on parties and voting are assembly size, district magnitude, and allocation formula. Other variables also matter to the functioning of an electoral system, notably list type (if the allocation formula is one in which parties present lists of candidates) and legal threshold (if any).³

Assembly size indicates the total number of seats in a representative assembly. It is a key variable because, other factors being constant, a larger assembly (for example, 650 seats in the United Kingdom) can accommodate more parties and also more diversity of member backgrounds than can a smaller assembly (for example, 41 seats in Trinidad and Tobago). Assembly size has been shown to be a critical variable in shaping party systems (Shugart & Taagepera, 2017; Taagepera, 2007).

In the Israeli case, assembly size has been fixed at 120 seats since the state's founding. This makes the Knesset smaller than the worldwide median assembly size (which is around 270), but not among the very smallest.

District magnitude is generally regarded as a crucial or even decisive factor (Taagepera & Shugart, 1989) in shaping the ability of parties of various levels of popularity to obtain representation. Like assembly size, district magnitude constrains who can and cannot win seats. At one extreme, each district elects only one member of the assembly. At the opposite extreme, every member of the assembly is elected in one nationwide district. Most electoral systems lie in between, with several districts, each of which elects several members. For instance, Portugal elects the 230 members of its National Assembly in twenty-one districts that range in magnitude from 2 to 47.

In the Israeli case, because there is only one district, the magnitude is equivalent to the assembly size: 120. This is the key sense in which the Israeli electoral system is "extreme," as 120 is one of the largest magnitudes among long-term democracies, surpassed only by the Netherlands (150 since 1956).⁴ In Israel the single nationwide district was originally intended as a temporary measure for the election of a Constituent Assembly shortly after the establishment of the new state (Brichta, 1988; Medding, 2000). Nearly seven decades later, it remains a key unchanged feature of the electoral system, even while various other provisions have been modified.

The *allocation formula* is a rule for taking a given constellation of votes within a district and converting them into seats. The broad families of allocation formula

are often broken down into two basic types: plurality and proportional. If the rule is plurality, all the seats in a district go to the party with the most votes.⁵ If it is proportional, as in Israel, a secondary question is which specific proportional representation (PR) formula to use.

At times Israel has used the Hare quota and largest remainders (LR-Hare) formula, but since 1973 it has used the D'Hondt divisors (for detailed definitions, see Shugart & Taagepera, 2017, pp. 36–40). The most important point is that D'Hondt is recognized by specialists as tending to be less proportional than LR-Hare for a given constellation of party vote shares and a constant district magnitude.

A further consideration about allocation formulas that is relevant to the Israeli case is the detailed procedure by which D'Hondt is implemented. Israeli law stipulates that as a first step, each eligible list obtains seats according to Hare quotas⁶; once this step is complete, the process switches over to D'Hondt divisors. In this latter step, any seats that remain to be allocated are awarded to “cartels,” meaning pairs of lists that signed a pre-election agreement on “remainder pooling.” Sometimes lists continue to stand alone at this second step, just as they must at the first. However, some parties sign up with a partner to pool their remainders in a cartel in order to increase the odds that one of them might qualify for an additional seat at the expense of some other cartel. (For instance, in 2015 there were four seats allocated in this second step, and there were four cartels that each consisted of two lists.) These cartels receive an additional seat if their total original votes would entitle them to more of the 120 seats based on D'Hondt divisors⁷ than they have won through the Hare quotas, and provided that seats remain unfilled. The process used in Israel is no different in the final allocation of seats from using D'Hondt from start to finish. The critical factor is how the remainders are treated; their allocation via D'Hondt renders the system as a whole D'Hondt and therefore somewhat less proportional than if LR-Hare were used.

Thresholds are provisions in the electoral law that specify that a party must obtain some minimum vote percentage in order to qualify for representation. To be effective in reducing party fragmentation, it must be set considerably higher than the minimum vote percentage that the district magnitude and formula would allow a party to gain representation if there were no threshold. A famous example is the 5 percent threshold in Germany, which has an electoral system that is otherwise highly proportional.

In the 1949 election Israel had a legal threshold that was simply equivalent to a quota.⁸ D'Hondt was used, and this allocation formula would be unlikely to award a seat to a party with such a low vote share anyway. In practice, the smallest seat-winning party in 1949 had 1.2 percent of the vote. In the 1951 election, for which the allocation formula was changed to LR-Hare, a legal threshold of 1 percent was used for the first time. Because of the greater proportionality of LR-Hare, had such a threshold not been adopted simultaneously, parties with less than 1 percent might have won seats.⁹

The threshold remained at 1 percent until 1992 (even with the change back to D'Hondt in 1973). It has been raised several times, culminating in the increase to 3.25 percent before the 2015 election. This threshold is significant, as discussed later, and thus while

Israel still can be said to have an “extreme” PR system, due to the high district magnitude, its threshold is now moderately high rather than particularly low, as formerly was the case.

List type refers to whether voters are given the opportunity to vote for individual candidates on a party list. If they are, it also refers to the rules that determine the final rank order of the list. Under a closed list, the voter has only a single list vote. The candidates are elected in an order determined prior to the election by the party (or an alliance of two or more parties presenting a common list). Open lists allow candidates to compete for “preference votes” that determine their order of election. Intermediate types, known as “flexible” lists, are common, especially in Europe (Renwick & Pilet, 2016). In flexible lists, most winners tend to be elected in their pre-election list order, but those who attain a stipulated quota of preference votes may be elected over others whose initial ranks were higher.

In the Israeli case, lists are fully closed. There is thus no opportunity for voters to favor some candidates over others. More precisely, there is no such opportunity in general elections. Some parties opt to hold primary elections, which allow the party’s members to shape the order of the list prior to the general election (see the chapter by Rahat on political reform in this volume; see also Hazan & Rahat, 2010). That voters are not able to vote for specific candidates on the closed lists does not necessarily mean that candidates do not “matter” for the elections; in fact, parties take considerable care to nominate visible candidates representing various social and demographic groups to which they are attempting to appeal.¹⁰

Table 19.1 summarizes these various electoral system provisions. The table emphasizes the key stability of the rules ever since 1949: single-district nationwide closed-list PR. Yet the changes of the formula and thresholds are not insignificant, as discussed later. Sometimes the threshold changed along with the allocation formula (1951), while at other times the threshold remained the same even while the formula changed (1973). Three times since 1992 the threshold has been raised. By Lijphart’s (1994, p. 13) criteria defining when a rules change is sufficient to qualify as a “new” electoral system, we can say that Israel has had *six* distinct electoral systems for its Knesset.

Table 19.1 Key Provisions of Israeli Electoral Systems

Years in Use	Assembly Size	District Magnitude	List Type	Allocation Formula	Legal Threshold
1949	120	120	closed	D'Hondt	0.83%
1951–1969	120	120	closed	LR-Hare	1%
1973–1988	120	120	closed	D'Hondt	1%
1992–2003	120	120	closed	D'Hondt	1.5%
2006–2013	120	120	closed	D'Hondt	2%
–	120	120	closed	D'Hondt	3.25%

Data source: Hazan et al. (2018).

TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Three tools for analysis of electoral systems and their effects are introduced in this section. These are the “effective number of parties” (an index of party-system fragmentation), “deviation from proportionality” (an index of the divergence of parties’ vote and seat shares), and a predictive tool known as the Seat Product Model (SPM), which allows us to determine whether or not the observed index values are close to the values that are expected, given the electoral system.

Effective Number of Parties

Not all parties are equal in size, whether measured by their votes percentages or their seats. From this obvious point derives the need for an index that allows us to scale and compare actual election outcomes. We can classify party systems as “two-party systems” versus “multiparty systems,” but doing so is not very helpful. We know Israel has a multiparty system, but how does it compare to other countries? How does the 2020 election compare to that of, say, 1977? Is it about as multiparty as expected, given its electoral system, or is it more or less so?

To answer such questions, Laakso and Taagepera (1979) devised a size-weighted count known as the “effective” number. Rather than just counting the number of parties winning one seat or winning some very minimal number of votes, we give each party in the system a weight. The obvious way to weight unequal components is to let their own size be the weighting factor. This means we square their fractional share. Then we sum up the squares. Finally, taking the reciprocal of this sum gives us a convenient index that summarizes the overall degree of fragmentation. In formulaic terms, this is

$$N_s = 1 / \sum (s_i)^2.$$

That is, we have the “effective number of seat-winning parties” designed by the letter N with the subscript S . The input in the right-hand side of the equation is each party’s s_i , which is to say its seat share (its number of seats, divided by assembly size). We could also calculate an “effective number of vote-earning parties,” N_v , using each party’s share of the votes (v_i). In this chapter we use only seats because (1) extreme PR in Israel means that the effective numbers of seats and votes are similar, and (2) seats are arguably more important due to their role in shaping who forms the government and who can pass laws.

A useful feature of the index is that it will always yield the actual number of parties if they are of equal size. If, as is usually the case, parties differ substantially in size, the effective number will be smaller than the actual number. No index of fragmentation or any other phenomenon can ever be perfect. After all, we are trying to summarize a lot of

Table 19.2 Effective Number of Seat-Winning Parties (N_s) in Israel and Other Countries

Country	Mean since 1990
Belgium	8.15
Israel	6.33
Netherlands	5.94
Italy	5.47
Switzerland	5.42
India	5.38
Finland	5.28
Denmark	4.96
Norway	4.46
Sweden	4.27
Iceland	4.02
Luxembourg	3.92
Germany	3.67
Ireland	3.62
Austria	3.59
Spain	3.06
New Zealand	2.95
Canada	2.88
France	2.80
Japan	2.71
Portugal	2.68
Australia	2.55
Greece	2.36
United Kingdom	2.35
Trinidad and Tobago	1.99
Malta	1.99
Jamaica	1.73
Barbados	1.70

information—here each of several parties' seat (or vote) shares—in a single number. However, the effective number of parties is extremely useful for comparing party systems, and it has become the standard measure in political science.

How does Israeli party-system fragmentation compare to that of other countries? Table 19.2 shows mean N_s for Israel and twenty-seven other countries.¹¹ The countries are sorted by descending N_s , averaged over the 1990–2017 period (but for Israel extended through the country's unusual three-election sequence of 2019–2020). Israel, with mean $N_s = 6.33$, ranks below only Belgium¹² and above the other case of a single nationwide district, the Netherlands. Of these countries, it is noteworthy that fewer than half have mean N_s over 4.00, and Israel is one of only two over 6.0. Consistent with its extreme PR, Israel has a highly fragmented parliamentary party system (see the chapter by Hazan on parties and the party system in this volume). While we should expect high

fragmentation, we shall see later that the actual mean in this period is considerably higher than we should expect, even given Israel's extreme electoral system.

Deviation from Proportionality

As with quantitatively summarizing the variable sizes of parties in an assembly or in the electorate, there are various measures for characterizing how "proportional" the seats-votes relationship is (Taagepera & Grofman, 2003). The one now best established in the literature is an index often referred to as the "least squares index" and first introduced by Gallagher (1991); I use D for "deviation from proportionality," which is calculated thus:

$$D = [\frac{1}{2} \sum (s_i - v_i)^2]^{1/2}.$$

As with the effective number of parties, we are squaring an element for each party and then summing up the squares. In this case, the element (in the parentheses) is each party's difference in vote and seat shares.¹³ After doing that, we take half because the gains of some overrepresented parties must be compensated by others' losses; taking half avoids double counting. Then, given that we started with squaring, the final step is to take the square root (i.e., the exponent 1/2). The resulting index can range from 0 (meaning perfect proportionality) to almost 1 (100 percent).

Table 19.3 shows Israel's deviation from proportionality in comparative perspective.¹⁴ The values have been converted to percentages for easier interpretation, and countries are sorted from lowest to highest deviation, averaged over the 1990–2017 period. Israel's mean D of 2.35 percent makes it one of only five with values below 3 percent over this period. Such a low deviation from proportionality is to be expected, given extreme PR.

On the other hand, Israel has only the fifth lowest disproportionality; why is it not even lower? The Netherlands, the other single-district case, is the lowest of all, at not much greater than 1 percent. The answer lies partly in the other features of the electoral system, such as the increased threshold in recent years, and partly in the tendency of some voters to support parties that end up too small to win a seat. Despite some other countries having lower deviation from proportionality, Israel's mean value of 2.35 percent still leaves it among the lowest. It is vastly lower than the mostly majoritarian electoral systems that populate the bottom lines of the table.

The Seat Product Model: A Predictive Tool for Party-System Outputs

The two preceding measures are descriptive indices. That is, they summarize via a single numerical value the actual information contained in a table of election results in which every party is listed with its votes and seats. Our third tool is a predictive model; that is,

Table 19.3 Deviation from Proportionality (D_i in Percent) in Israel and Other Countries

Country	Mean since 1990
Netherlands	1.08
Denmark	1.55
Sweden	1.63
Austria	1.80
Israel	2.35
Belgium	3.17
Switzerland	3.38
Finland	3.43
Norway	3.54
Germany	4.16
Ireland	4.83
Portugal	5.06
Spain	6.18
Italy	6.86
Greece	6.94
India	7.70
Japan	8.81
New Zealand	8.84
Australia	10.36
Trinidad and Tobago	11.48
Canada	14.83
United Kingdom	15.94
Jamaica	18.56
France	21.63

it tells us what we should expect an index value to be. It thus allows us to determine whether the country—or a given election—is anomalously high or low, given the electoral system.

The term “seat product” refers to the multiplication of the country’s average district magnitude (designated M) and assembly size (S). In Israel $M = S$, and thus the seat product is $120 \times 120 = 14,400$. This number by itself is not especially interesting, however. The reason the seat product is valuable is that it allows us to predict so much from such a simple input. Here I offer a highly condensed version of the logic. Readers seeking details of the derivation are referred to Shugart and Taagepera (2017, 2018).

It was noted previously that both a district’s magnitude and the total assembly size impose constraints on representation. Put simply, if your district elects one member of parliament, it is straightforward that only one party can represent the district. Extending the logic, if it elects four members, it could still elect just one party (which wins 100 percent of the district’s seats), or it could send to the assembly representatives of four parties (each with one seat). The reality is likely somewhere in between. The same logic applies to the assembly: if there are one hundred seats, we know the number of represented

parties could range from one to one hundred, although neither extreme is actually likely. But where might the number end up? The answer lies in a powerful simplifying assumption: take the geometric mean of the extremes. When the lowest possible value is one, this is the same as taking the square root of the magnitude or assembly size. That is, in the absence of any other information, if we have a district with $M = 4$, we might expect two parties to win seats on average, and if we have an assembly with $S = 100$, we might expect ten—again, on average.

What Taagepera (2007, pp. 116–122) first demonstrated was that this logic works for any average magnitude and any assembly size. Introducing some further notation, let N_{so} be the raw count of the number of parties that win at least one seat (the addition of the zero to the subscript indicates it is not the effective number, N_s , but an unweighted count). We expect $N_{so} = M^{1/2}$ and $N_{so} = S^{1/2}$. Thus, for any given S and mean M , we must have $N_{so} = (MS)^{1/4}$. We now have a way to compare any country to a logically expected value. In the case of Israel, with $M = S = 120$, we expect $N_{so} = (14,400)^{1/4} = 10.95$, or about eleven parties per election winning at least one seat. In other words, the fact that Israel has a highly fragmented party system is not a surprise; its electoral system predicts that! How much individual elections conform to, or deviate from, this prediction is discussed later in the chapter.

Of course, as already mentioned, we have an index that is the size-weighted count, which is generally of more interest than the raw count. Due to a systematic way in which the effective number and the raw number are related to one another (details in Taagepera, 2007, pp. 152, 160–164), we can derive an expectation for the effective number of seat-winning parties based on a country's seat product:

$$N_s = (MS)^{1/6}.$$

There is also a systematic relationship between the effective number of parties and the largest share. Given the logic developed also in Taagepera (2007, p. 122), we have

$$s_1 = (MS)^{-1/8}.$$

Finally, Shugart and Taagepera (2017, pp. 143–146) also derive an expectation for deviation from proportionality:

$$D = 0.5(MS)^{-1/3}.$$

Each of these expressions has been tested extensively and found to explain roughly 60 percent of the variance across democratic elections in the outcomes of interest (Shugart & Taagepera, 2017). That is a remarkable success for a simple deductive model based on only two, purely institutional, inputs. The set of equations listed here are known, collectively, as the Seat Product Model (SPM). The next section discusses how well they explain Israel. The purpose of the exercise is to help us answer the question: Is Israel's party-system fragmentation about what we should expect? Or is it unusually high or

low? We can also measure how much it has changed over time; the seat product has not varied, but both the allocation formula and the threshold have. And of course so have the political parties contesting elections and the interests and opinions of the voters casting ballots.

ISRAEL AND THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM EFFECT ON THE PARTY SYSTEM OVER TIME

This section shows how Israel's party-system outputs over time stack up against the expectations derived from its electoral systems. Figure 19.1 plots four outputs, each in its own panel: the raw count of the number of lists winning at least one seat (N_{so}), the effective number of seat-winning lists (N_s), the seat share of the largest list (s_1), and the deviation from proportionality (D). All of these quantities are based on lists, rather than parties, because it is common in Israel for two or more parties to combine before an election and present an alliance list. Because these lists are closed, voters are unable to differentiate the parties (or their candidates) within a list; thus it is the lists that are the agents competing for votes to which the seat-allocation process is applied.¹⁵ In each panel the solid gray fluctuating line plots the actually observed value at each election (with a dot), the dashed gray line is the mean for all Israeli elections (1949–2020), and the horizontal solid line is the expectation from the SPM for that given output. The vertical light gray lines mark changes in the electoral system, as defined in table 19.1; the changes in formula or legal threshold are noted in the first plot in the upper left. In addition, the era of the direct prime ministerial elections is noted with the shaded gray background.

Focusing first on the horizontal solid and dashed lines—respectively, the expected value and the actual mean—we see that the Israeli party system outputs do not differ greatly from what the SPM predicts that they should be. The number of lists winning at least one seat is predicted to be high, due to the election of the entire assembly in a large district magnitude, and it is indeed high. It has averaged $N_{so} = 11.8$, only slightly higher than the expected value, $N_{so} = 11$. Likewise it is utterly unsurprising that the effective number of seat-winning lists also tends to be high. The SPM would lead us to expect an electoral system like Israel's to have $N_s = 4.93$; the observed long-term mean of $N_s = 5.34$ is scarcely higher. Such an extreme electoral system would be predicted to have seat share of the largest list, $s_1 = 0.302$; the observed average is $s_1 = 0.331$. Finally, in deviation from proportionality, befitting its "extreme PR" institutions, Israel is expected to have $D = 0.0206$, and its observed average over the long haul is almost that, $D = 0.0204$. In other words, by having such an extremely high seat product, Israel has roughly the party system we should expect—on average, over time.

Of course each election is an event of its own, establishing the seat balance among parties in the Knesset and thereby the bargaining context for the formation of a coalition government. The seat product, which has not changed in Israel (even as other rules have

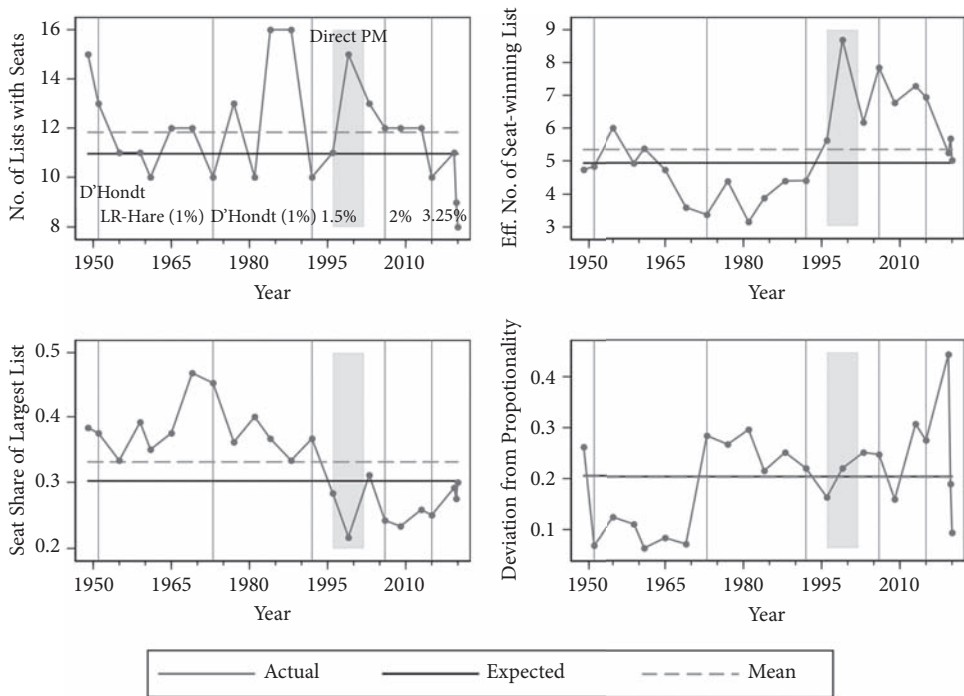


FIGURE 19.1 Party system outputs in Israel over time and relative to seat product expectations.

changed), only sets the parameters of the game. The players—those who form parties and lists and those who vote for them—are the ones who ultimately yield a given (effective) number of lists, largest list seat share, and proportionality. In each election, and over time, these factors can shift, even if the seat product does not. When we turn to the patterns of the observed election-specific values, we see quite starkly how the politics of the time can lead to deviations from the long-term averages and predicted values.

The number of lists winning at least one seat (N_{so} , shown in the upper left panel of figure 19.1) at an election has varied from eight to sixteen. The light vertical lines that mark changes in the electoral system show that each such change has corresponded with an immediate drop in the number of lists winning representation, as was typically the intention of larger parties promoting the changes (Doron & Maor, 1991). However, often the reduction in N_{so} proves ephemeral. The spikes in N_{so} occurred in 1984 and 1988, when the top two parties (Labor and Likud) were about evenly balanced and sharing power in “Unity” governments. The lowest value, eight, was reached in the most recent election, that of March 2020. Previously, the lowest had been ten in 2015. These low points are noteworthy. The 2015 election, as we see from the data plot, marked the adoption of the highest legal threshold yet (3.25 percent). The threshold increase was in large part responsible for the reduction of winning lists, as three previously separate lists that get their votes mostly from the state’s Arab population presented an alliance list (The Joint List), and another small party did not contest the election (Kadima).¹⁶ The 2020

election was the third in eleven months of political deadlock. Following the continuing failure to form a government after the second election of 2019, some new alliance lists formed (notably Labor and Meretz joining forces), leading to a drop in the number of represented lists.

The vertical lines at 1992 and 2006 similarly mark increases in the threshold and also represent elections in which the number of parties in the Knesset fell. However, immediately after the 1992 increase in the threshold, new parties emerged and made it into the Knesset. As can be seen in the data plot, a large surge in lists winning seats occurred during the period of directly elected prime minister. In 1999, there were fifteen lists, as many voters split their tickets, voting for their preferred executive candidate and then giving their Knesset list vote to a small sectoral party (Kenig et al., 2005; Rahat, 2004). Thus, while the recent threshold increases appear to have a short-run impact on the number of parties represented,¹⁷ they do not necessarily have a lasting effect. They simply raise the barrier to entry, but new parties may emerge and prove able to clear the higher threshold.

Turning to the effective number of lists (N_s) in the upper right panel of figure 19.1, we see that Israel's long-term conformity to the SPM masks three distinct periods. In the earliest elections, N_s tended to be only slightly higher than the predicted value (solid horizontal line); then for 1969 through 1988, by this standard measure of the effective (size-weighted) number of parties the party system was actually *underfragmented*. This corresponds to the anomalously high size of the largest list (s_1) in this period (as seen in the lower-left panel). This was the heyday of the dominance of the Labor-led Alignment (Arian & Barnes, 1974), even if the trend in s_1 was actually downward in most of the period following its peak in 1969 (when Alignment won almost 47 percent of the seats).¹⁸ Starting in 1996—the first Knesset election to be held alongside a prime ministerial election—the effective number of parties was well above the expectation for several elections, peaking at a remarkable 8.7 in 1999. Some of the legacy of increased minor-party voting clearly survived even the return to a purely parliamentary executive system (Stoll, 2013) with the 2003 election. In 2019–2020, however, all three elections resulted in an effective number of lists very near both the SPM prediction and the long-term Israeli average.

If the effective number of lists is high, it is almost a certainty that the size of the largest list will be unusually low. Indeed, as the lower left panel of figure 19.1 shows, it was below the predicted value in every election from 1992 to 2015, except 2003. While we should expect Israel to have a largest list with only around 30 percent of the seats, in many elections in the 1990s and through 2015 the largest share was around 25 percent. In 2019–2020, the largest share was back near the expected 30 percent in all three elections, with Likud reaching exactly 30 percent (thirty-six seats) in March 2020. It is worth emphasizing that the periods when one party was gaining over 40 percent of the seats actually are more surprising, based on the electoral system, than the 1992–2015 period of such a small leading party. The plots in figure 19.1 show that the various indicators can fluctuate upward and downward. Thus while the three recent elections have shown convergence toward expectations, results could easily deviate again in the future, depending on political developments.

Finally, let us inspect the lower-right panel of figure 19.1 for deviation from proportionality (D). It bears emphasizing that D in Israel never reached even 3 percent in any election until April 2019 (4.5 percent). Given that many countries, even with PR systems, have D above 4 percent, and that those with majoritarian systems typically exceed 10 percent, we see that Israel's status as an "extreme proportional" system is very much upheld. Moreover, in several elections D has been below 1.5 percent. The clearest demarcation of the effects of electoral systems, taking into account detailed rules beyond the constant seat product, is the period of low values from 1951 to 1969. This was the period when Israel used LR-Hare with a 1 percent threshold. The 1949 election, using D'Hondt (but a lower threshold), and the period 1973–1988, when the threshold remained at 1 percent but D'Hondt was adopted again, suggest that the allocation rule has had more impact on proportionality in Israel than has the threshold.¹⁹ Rather remarkably, the 2020 election exhibited a low level of disproportionality, with D below 1 percent, that had not been seen since the days when Israel used the LR-Hare system and a threshold no higher than 1 percent.

That the country's record high and near-record low both occurred during the 2019–2020 period of repeat elections shows strikingly how parties and voters respond to the incentives of a legal threshold. In April 2019, a key reason for the high value of disproportionality was the formation of a party called New Right, splitting off from Bayit Yehudi. New Right missed the threshold by what is likely one of the narrowest margins ever in any proportional system that uses a legal threshold. The party won 3.22 percent of the vote, failing to win any seats and thus contributing greatly to the spike in D . Other parties also contributed, including another party on the right, Zehut (2.7 percent), and Gesher (1.7 percent). None of these parties tried again in September. New Right merged back in with other nationalist and religious-Zionist parties (including Bayit Yehudi in a new alliance list called Yamina), Gesher joined an alliance list with Labor, and Zehut shut down. The growing gap between the smallest party to clear the threshold and the largest below it is telling: 0.11 percent in April 2019, 2.46 percent in September 2019, and 4.82 percent in March 2020. After the failures of smaller parties in the first 2019 election, each repeat election resulted in further consolidation to reduce the wasting of votes below the threshold and thereby reduce deviation from proportionality.

The results discussed in this section show both the power and the limits of analysis of electoral systems for explaining party-system outputs. On the one hand, Israel behaves as we should expect for an electoral system with a very high seat product—that is, the election of the entire assembly in one large-magnitude district. On average since 1949, the number of parties (or, more accurately, lists) has been high, as has the effective number, with numerous different groups and ideological tendencies having their own parties. The size of the largest party is far short of 50 percent, necessitating multiparty coalition governments. Disproportionality is low relative to most other proportional representation systems. On the other hand, individual elections often deviate from expectations, as actual politics is only constrained, not determined, by the rules. Importantly, election outcomes have been about as likely to be above the expected outputs as below them. There have been distinct periods, with recent decades mostly

reflecting greater fragmentation and somewhat increased deviation from proportionality. These trends are not necessarily permanent, and the elections of 2019–2020 showed some tendency toward reduced fragmentation. Whether recent trends persist depends on political choices of both party leaders and voters in future elections.

CONCLUSION

Israel has an extreme electoral system. While numerous democracies in Europe and elsewhere use PR, Israel is one of the few countries to use it in a single nationwide district. This district has an unusually high magnitude, by comparative standards, at 120. Moreover, the party lists are closed, making Israel also a rare case of very high magnitude without any degree of voting for individual candidates.

Given such extreme institutions, it should not be a surprise that Israel has a highly fragmented party system. Indeed, using the SPM (Shugart & Taagepera, 2017), we are able to determine that, averaged over the entire 1949–2020 period, Israel has about the degree of fragmentation that it should expect. Over time, due to changes in voter preferences and the formation of new parties, various indicators of the party system have fluctuated. At times the party system has been less fragmented than expected from the SPM, while at other times it has been more so. The bottom line is that high fragmentation is no surprise, even if it is sometimes “excessive” both from the standpoint of predictive analysis and, arguably, from a normative viewpoint.

The normative concern over “excessive” fragmentation raises the question of potential reform to the electoral system. As we have seen, secondary features (as distinct from district magnitude and assembly size) have been changed at times. Many other changes have been proposed over the years (Diskin & Diskin, 1995; Hazan et al., 2018). Implemented reforms to Knesset elections have included the move back to D’Hondt, which is relatively more favorable to larger parties, for the 1973 election, and four increases in the legal threshold (see also the chapter by Rahat on political reforms in this volume). The most recent increase in the threshold, in 2015, has resulted in a moderately high barrier to entry into the Knesset, yet high fragmentation persisted, with some notable reduction during the three-election sequence of 2019–2020. Evidently the source of fragmentation is not only the entry of many small parties; it is also the lack of two parties significantly larger than the rest or, to put it another way, fragmentation among “middle-sized” parties. In such a context, threshold increases may not help much. The emergence of a close balance between the top two lists is a key reason for the reduction in fragmentation seen in 2019–2020. However, this reduction may not persist, particularly given the breakup of the Blue and White alliance list after the March 2020 election. A higher threshold can have mixed effects on the type of fragmentation seen in the 1990s and early 2000s. On the one hand, it may induce small parties to forge alliances (as with the Joint List in 2015 and the Labor–Gesher–Meretz list in 2020). On the other hand, it may risk a large increase in disproportionality due to voters supporting parties that fall

below the threshold (such as with New Right, Zehut, and Gesher in April 2019), while raising the seat shares of all other parties that clear the threshold.

If Israeli leaders wanted to redistribute seats not from tiny parties to all others, but from parties of small to medium size (say, the 3.25 to 15 percent range) to larger parties, there is no mystery in how to do so. The simplest way would be to *reduce the seat product*. If we assume a constant Knesset size of 120, it is straightforward to estimate what the effective number of lists (N_s), the size of the largest, and the disproportionality would be for a given mean district magnitude. For instance, ten districts of mean magnitude 12 would create a seat product of 1,440 (12×120).²⁰ With such a seat product, we would expect $N_s = 3.37$, which if achieved would place Israel near the midpoint of our comparison set of democracies (see table 19.2). One could generate similar comparisons for the other outputs, or for other proposed values of the seat product, simply by computing results from the various formulas reported earlier in this chapter. Of course there is no guarantee that the behavior of parties and voters would follow the formulas! Israel's mean N_s for the eleven elections since 1990 is about 30 percent higher than predicted. Most likely, even with a reduction of the seat product the result would still be higher than the hypothetically lowered prediction. Still, even 30 percent over our hypothetical value from ten districts would be about $N_s = 4.37$, which would be a substantial reduction.²¹

Ultimately, any reform of the electoral system is a political decision. The technical question of how to achieve movement in a desired direction and to a desired degree is not difficult. The comparative political science of electoral systems points the way to how to achieve such movement, as reviewed in this chapter. The far more difficult question is the one of political will to nudge the system more strongly toward a less-fragmented party system.

AUTHOR NOTE

The tables and the figure in this chapter were prepared by the author solely for this chapter. The data source is Struthers, Li, and Shugart (2018) unless otherwise indicated.

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NOTES

1. For a comprehensive review of this literature, see Moser et al. (2018).
2. During this period the prime minister and cabinet remained responsible to the Knesset majority. See Samuels and Shugart (2010, pp. 164–165, 179–190) for a comparative treatment.

3. Another variable present in some systems is districting structure, such as an “upper tier” that may be used. There never has been such a tier in the Israeli system, and therefore this feature is not discussed here.
4. In recent years Slovakia and Serbia have emerged as democracies with a larger district magnitude than Israel’s (150 in Slovakia since the move to a single nationwide district in 1998, and 225 in Serbia). At times a single nationwide district of 450 seats has been used in both Ukraine and the Russian Federation.
5. Most of the time plurality rule is used in districts electing only a single seat, as in the United States and United Kingdom.
6. The quota is defined as $1/M$; thus in Israel a party receives a seat for each 0.833 percent of the votes it has obtained, provided it has cleared the threshold.
7. A D’Hondt divisor is a series of quotients resulting from successively dividing the list’s or cartel’s votes by $s + 1$, where s is the number of seats already obtained.
8. The quota was the Droop quota (Hazan et al., 2018), rather than Hare. The two quotas are hardly different when M is high: Droop is $1/(M + 1) = 1/121 = 0.8265\%$; Hare is $1/120 = 0.8333\%$.
9. In the absence of the raised threshold, 0.833 percent (a quota) would have been sufficient, but not necessary, to qualify for a seat. That is, a smaller party could have one of the largest remainders and hence win a seat. The threshold effectively required 1.20 times the quota to win a seat.
10. Several specific examples are offered by Shugart and Taagepera (2017, pp. 76–77).
11. The case selection is all countries with parliamentary or semipresidential systems that had been continuously democratic for at least thirty-five years as of 2015.
12. The Flemish and French regions of Belgium essentially have their own distinct party systems.
13. Due to squaring, it does not matter whether the difference for a given party is positive or negative.
14. The list of countries is mostly identical to that in table 19.2, but data were incomplete for some countries.
15. There is no guarantee that the parties stay together after an election; they may continue to operate separately (as do the components of the Joint List) or they may split apart (as when Blue and White broke into three fragments after the 2020 election, some joining the government and some going into opposition). Here we are interested only in the lists as they exist for the election itself.
16. Similarly, the one-list increase in the first election of 2019 resulted from the Joint List having split into two lists for that election; they then recombined for the September election.
17. Shugart and Taagepera (2017, pp. 293–299) introduce an alternative model for predicting party system outputs based on thresholds instead of the seat product. However, they note that in most situations (including the Israeli case), the SPM is more reliably accurate than their threshold model.
18. The 1969 election also marked the emergence of an alliance on the right that was the forerunner of the current Likud.
19. A regression confirms this. A dependent variable of the ratio of observed D to that expected from the SPM is increased significantly by D’Hondt, but the estimated effect of the threshold is essentially zero. The regression constant term is 0.44, signaling the tendency of the LR-Hare elections to have D significantly lower than the SPM prediction. The D’Hondt dummy variable has a significant ($p < .001$) coefficient of 0.77, indicating

- that the use of D'Hondt in Israel tends to result in D about 1.20 times as high as predicted from the magnitude of the single district ($R^2 = 0.34$).
20. An increase in the Knesset's size would be warranted, as it is small relative to current population. The "cube root law" (Taagepera & Shugart, 1989) suggests assemblies tend to have a size equivalent to the cube root of population; the law is backed by logic and is empirically quite accurate. For Israel, the cube root would imply around 200 seats. Such an increase would allow the country to have many more districts—enhancing local representation—while still maintaining an electoral system conducive to a moderated multipartism. For instance, one could have 200 seats elected in twenty-five regional districts, for a seat product of 1,600, or in forty districts for a seat product of 1,000.
 21. Similarly, if it was deemed desirable to induce candidates to seek individual votes, the electoral system solution is straightforward: adopt an open or flexible list. For one such detailed proposal, see Shugart (2013).

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CHAPTER 20

PARTIES AND THE PARTY SYSTEM OF ISRAEL

REUVEN Y. HAZAN

WHEN one assesses the political parties in Israel over the last seventy plus years, two significant developments stand out. First is the transformation of party organization from strong, central actors that controlled both state and society to significantly weaker players that have lost much of their influence over Israeli society, increasingly challenged by other actors. The second development is the shift in the main ideological cleavage that defined the parties, from a socioeconomic left–right divide to one focused on security, pitting doves against hawks.

PARTY ORGANIZATION

Parties were the central actors both in the pre-state period and during the first decades after independence. The State of Israel was established by parties, and at least until the 1960s it was referred to as a “parties state” (Akzin, 1955). These strong, ideological, well-organized parties—first and foremost Mapai/Labor—controlled other governmental organs such as the bureaucracy, the local authorities, and the national institutions. Parties were the dominant, maybe even the exclusive, mediators between state and society (Horowitz & Lissak, 1989). They had a wide membership base that was estimated at more than one-quarter of the population. They had affiliated youth movements, sports clubs, newspapers, and magazines. Even healthcare associations and banks were linked to and identified with the parties. As such, they can be described as classic mass parties (Duverger, 1954), which provided their members with social, cultural, educational, employment, housing, and economic support, among other things.

In the 1970s, however, the Israeli parties began to decline, due to institutional and cultural processes that are more comparative in nature than unique to the Israeli case (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000). For example, the development of mass media reduced the

citizens' dependence on parties. As the Israeli parties lost their dominant status as "the" mediators between state and society, other channels of communication between the citizen and the state became available with the consolidation of a more autonomous civil society (Galnoor, 1982). The judicialization of politics (Edelman, 1995) also signaled the creation of an additional channel of influence on both state and society, while the personalization of politics (Rahat & Sheaffer, 2007) meant that citizens could approach individual politicians, regardless of their political affiliation, with their demands and grievances. Several additional political processes also contributed to party decline in Israel, among them the growing mistrust of the political system by the public, particularly wariness of the political parties, and reforms in the electoral system, which reduced the size of the main ruling parties dramatically.

The contemporary Israeli party system is currently composed of both old parties, with roots going back to the pre-state era of the British Mandate for Palestine, and (relatively) new parties, continuously being established since the foundation of the state. Both party types still represent the Israeli "tribes" or cleavages quite well, contributing to the legitimacy of the political system. Some of the parties, however, continue to represent Israeli society far too well, nourishing sociopolitical subcultures that with the passing of time now have less, rather than more, in common with the rest of the polity.

Party discipline and cohesion has traditionally characterized the parties in the Knesset, Israel's parliament (Rahat, 2007). Knesset members occasionally vote against their party position or abstain from voting, but an examination of the voting patterns in the plenary shows that the level of party cohesion in Israel is still quite high. The parliamentary party groups—the legislative arm of the political parties—have managed to remain the key players in the legislative arena (Hazan & Friedberg, 2019). In short, while in the social arena the parties have weakened dramatically over the years, they remain strong inside the legislative arena, largely exhibiting the characteristics associated with cartel parties embedded more in the state than in society (Katz & Mair, 1995; Yishai, 2001).

PARTY IDEOLOGY

Until 1967 the main ideological cleavage in Israel was similar to that in most other countries: a socialist and social-democratic Left that advocated state involvement in the economy versus a capitalist Right that supported private enterprise. This cleavage was well-pronounced through the distinction between the group of "workers' parties" and the camp of "citizens' parties." The 1967 war, however, changed everything, giving predominance to the debate on foreign affairs and security. Arian and Shamir (1983) claim that from the 1970s the socioeconomic differentiation of Israeli parties into Left and Right all but lost its meaning. However, the terms "Left" and "Right" did not become devoid of any significance; rather, they were adopted to distinguish between

the parties' positions on security, which became the most salient dimension (Ventura & Shamir, 1991).

The focus of the security debate is the fate of the territories that were captured in the 1967 war. On one side of the debate are the doves, who support a "land for peace" compromise with the Arab countries and the Palestinians. They justify this stance as moral (the right of the Palestinians to self-determination), as strategic (Israel is a tiny country, surrounded by more than twenty Arab states, and cannot live by the sword forever), and as a demographic interest of Israel (the Israeli Arabs and Palestinians together will be a majority if Israel annexes the territories). On the other side of the debate are the hawks, who support the idea of "Greater Israel" and policies that would strengthen the hold of Israel on these territories, such as the building of settlements and the development of existing ones. They justify this stance as historical-religious (the land of biblical Israel), as strategic (only resolute steadfastness can convince a hostile Arab world that Israel is resilient), and as based on security interests (the territories are an important buffer zone, allowing Israel to better defend itself, and a hostile Palestinian state would threaten Israel's existence).

More than fifty years after the 1967 war, this divide is still the main cleavage in Israeli politics. It defines the meaning of doves/Left and hawks/Right and influences voting more than any other division. The coalition potential of parties that come together to form a government is defined first and foremost by their stance on this issue. The ideological doves-hawks cleavage is also correlated and affiliated with self-identity, and it is linked with other sociopolitical divides.

While the security cleavage defines the main political parties and their camps, there have always been two other groups of parties based on the two main minorities in Israeli society: ultra-Orthodox Jews and Israeli Arabs. For this reason, among others, the second most important political cleavage in Israel has traditionally been religion. These four groups of parties have existed over time, while a fifth has come and gone but recently has gained some resilience. The parties represented in the Knesset, both now and in the past, can thus be classified into the following five political camps: dovish-left, hawkish-right, ultra-Orthodox, Arab, and center.

The most prominent member of the dovish or Left camp was Labor (and its predecessor Mapai), which dominated pre-state and state politics until 1977. The Left includes parties with socialist and social-democratic ideologies and/or parties with dovish perceptions (especially since 1967). During the last decade, after the 2013, 2015, 2019, and 2020 elections, the parties in this camp were Labor and the smaller, more left-wing Meretz.

The Right includes parties that rejected the dominant socialist ideology (before 1967) and also parties that hold hawkish stances (mainly since 1967). Prominent in this camp is Likud, which has established itself as the leading force in Israeli politics since 1977. In the last decade this camp included Yisrael Beiteinu, a very hawkish yet secular party based largely on the vote of the Russian immigrants, and HaBait Hayehudi and Ichud Hayemin/Yemina, religious and very hawkish electoral alliances.

The ultra-Orthodox camp includes those parties that represent ultra-religious identities and interests exclusively. In the past these parties positioned themselves in the middle of the party spectrum, but since 1977 it has been clear that they lean to the right on security issues, preferring to support and to join right-wing governments. The two ultra-Orthodox parties are distinguished mainly by their cultural makeup; Shas purports to represent the Mizrahi (Sephardi) community, and United Torah Judaism is overwhelmingly Ashkenazi in demographic composition.

The Arab camp includes those parties a vast majority of whose voters and representatives are Israeli Arabs. Since the 1980s these include different streams, such as Arab nationalist and Muslim. They all hold non-Zionist, or even anti-Zionist, stances, and none of their members has ever participated in any Israeli government. In 2013 there were three small Arab parties—Hadash, Balad, and Ra’am/Ta’al. In 2015 they all ran together under the label of the Joint List. They split into two components in the first 2019 election, but reunited in the subsequent 2019 and 2020 elections.

The electoral base of the center has changed dramatically, especially in the aftermath of the 2011 social protests. The center used to be a “third way” between the dovish and the hawkish camps, exemplified by Kadima in 2009, but it then turned its focus to domestic socioeconomic policies in response to the shifting concerns of those who became its core voters. In 2013 the new Yesh Atid Party was the primary centrist party; in 2015 Kulanu appeared in the center and competed with Yesh Atid for the centrist socio-economic vote. But in the 2019 and 2020 elections Yesh Atid merged with two new parties (Hosen Israel and Telem) to form Blue and White, which was led by several former military generals and once again focused on security issues, while Kulanu merged with Likud.

None of these five groups had a majority in the population or in politics (see Table 20.1; for an illustration of the 2020 election results and the parties on the two main dimensions of electoral competition see Figure 20.1). This means that cross-party cooperation in government formation has to include multiple parties across ideological groups in the Israeli party system.

Table 20.1 Percent of Seats Won by Party Groups in the Knesset, 2013–2020

Election	Arab	Left	Center	Right	Orthodox
2013	9	22	18	36	15
2015	11	24	18	36	11
2019a	8	8	33	38	13
2019b	11	9	28	39	13
2020	12	6	28	41	13

Note: 2019a refers to the April election; 2019b refers to the September election.

Source: Data compiled from the Knesset website, http://knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res.htm

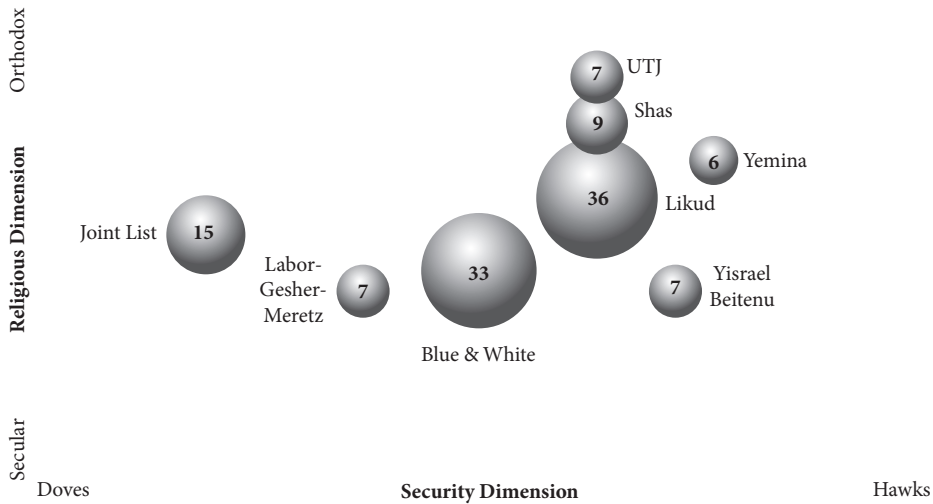


FIGURE 20.1 Parties, seats, and ideology in Israel after the 2020 elections.

Source: Produced by the author and Nevet Basker.

THE PARTY SYSTEM

The Knesset often plays host to a multitude of parties at the same time, sometimes even more than a dozen. This extreme multiparty constellation of the Israeli party system has left most observers in despair. Elections for the Knesset have produced tens of parties vying for seats, with an average of a dozen actually winning representation. Yet most of the parties failed to survive even a single decade. None of the twenty-one parties that put up candidates for the first election in 1949 was listed in the elections for the twenty-third Knesset in 2020.

However, this cursory description is quite misleading. Scholars familiar with Israeli politics have pointed out the remarkable consistency that the extreme multiparty system has displayed. When the party system is divided by blocs rather than by parties, this stability is nothing short of remarkable (Gutmann, 1979). Each of the parties belongs to one of only a handful of party families or “camps,” which overlap or correspond with long-established societal cleavages (Arian & Shamir, 2008; Shamir & Arian, 1999). Belonging to these camps reflects a party’s ideology and in many cases a social identity. That is, the association of a particular party with a specific camp gives voters the necessary signs—in terms of both ideology and identity—to make an informed choice when voting. It also influences coalition politics, because while most Israeli voters would not stray from “their camp,” they do swing from one party to another within a camp, especially when one party in the camp is more likely to be in the government that will be formed after the elections. That is, while loyalty to a specific party has declined, as has the dominance of parties, identification with a particular bloc of parties has remained.

During the first three decades of statehood, for example, one dominant party held power, and its bloc of parties on the left never received less than 47 percent of the vote or more than 51 percent. The rival bloc on the right never received less than 23 percent or more than 27 percent. The average deviation for both groups, for the entire period, was less than 1 percent. The rapid appearance and disappearance of parties is thus downplayed by focusing on blocs, not parties, whose cores have remained the same over time. This stability was sustained while the population doubled, tripled, and quadrupled, due largely to massive immigration from nondemocratic countries of people having little to no connection with the ideologies of the main parties.

The stability, however, did not last, and a crucial transformation took place in the late 1970s. Israel, one of the twenty-three established liberal democracies in the late 1950s, is also one of only four that had a radically different party system thirty years later (Ware, 1996, p. 213). This change did not alter the basic party blocs or their cores, but only the distribution of the vote between them. The dominant party and its allies on the left were reduced to a status equal to that of their main rivals on the right, allowing the ultra-Orthodox bloc (which remained the same in size) to become the power broker between the two competing sides. In the elections from the late 1970s through the mid-1990s, apart from the rise of the Right, consistency was maintained as in the previous period. However, a second transformation began in the 1990s and continues until today, with deeper changes than the first period of adjustment and over a much larger time. A puzzling array of new parties and a new bloc, name changes, alliances, mergers, and splits has decimated much of the stability that was evident throughout most of Israel's first fifty years.

This chapter now delineates the four stages of development in the Israeli party system: (1) the first almost thirty years of stability under one-party dominance; (2) an interim transformative period; (3) a second period of stability, lasting twenty years and defined by competitive bipolarity; and (4) the ongoing phase of significant and prolonged change. These stages are not chronologically separate—one stage ebbs and flows into the other—and they have reciprocal influences; nonetheless it is possible to demarcate them.

Party System A: A Dominant Party in a Moderate Multiparty System

A dominant party, according to Duverger (1954, pp. 308–309), is larger than any other and clearly outdistances its rivals over a period of time. Electorally, a dominant party does not have to hold a majority of the seats. Majority status is a facilitating condition, but not a necessary one. Domination is not only a question of power, according to Duverger, but also of influence. Beyond the electoral element, there are also sociological and belief factors. A party is dominant when it is identified with an epoch and when public opinion considers it to be dominant. Hence, even the opponents of the dominant

Table 20.2 Percentage of Knesset Seats Won by the Two Largest Parties, 1949–1973

Party	1949	1951	1955	1959	1961	1965	1969	1973
Mapai	38	38	33	39	35	38	47	43
2nd largest	16	17	13	14	14	22	22	33

Source: Data compiled from the Knesset website, http://knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res.htm

party acknowledge its superior status and influence. A dominant party thus has a stabilizing influence on the entire party system.

The dominant party in Israel's multiparty system until the 1970s was Mapai and its successors (Medding, 1972). In the first eight Knesset elections, Mapai clearly outdistanced its rivals. Table 20.2 shows the percentage of seats obtained by Mapai compared to the second largest party in the Knesset. Despite never having obtained a majority, Mapai won more than twice the number of seats than its nearest rival in six of the first seven elections; only in 1973 was this gap reduced to 10 percent of the total number of seats. After every election it was Mapai that was called on to form the government and that was able to control a majority within the coalition.

But it was more than electoral advantage that made Mapai the dominant party. Mapai was located in the middle of the party spectrum, could prevent the formation of a coalition by those to its right or its left, and as such occupied the pivotal position during the first eight Knesset elections. In addition, despite its nondoctrinaire socialism—which would make it a candidate for the moderate Left by European standards—Mapai's ideological position in Israeli politics was in the middle not only on the left–right socioeconomic continuum, but also in the two other spectra that were relevant in Israeli politics: the dovish–hawkish continuum on security that came to dominate party politics after 1967 and the religious–secular continuum involving issues of religion and state.

Mapai's electoral size, pivotal role, and middle positioning combined to make it a dominant party according to all the criteria posed by Duverger. Not only was the party identified with the struggle for Israel's independence and its leaders considered the founding fathers of the state, but as Horowitz (1977, p. 4) pointed out, "other parties as well accommodated themselves to this state of affairs, aiming to become junior partners in government or, as the leader of one such party once put it, to be 'a corrective rather than an alternative.'" Mapai's dominance brought stability to the party system despite the purely proportional electoral system, ideological doctrinism, and extreme multipartism. Therefore, in a country that lacked a consensus, the presence of a dominant party was the manner by which stability and moderation were obtained and maintained (Arian & Barnes, 1974).

Party System Change 1: The Collapse of Domination

Duverger (1954, p. 312) posited that “the dominant party wears itself out in office, it loses its vigour, its arteries harden . . . every domination bears within itself the seeds of its own destruction.” The collapse of domination in Israel was due to the demise of all the characteristics attributed to Mapai during its dominant phase: its prevailing ideology and size, pivotal role, and centrality.

The erosion of Mapai’s status began long before it was deposed electorally. Arian (1979) shows the decline of both political and ideological dominance based on voter surveys that exhibit a slow but consistent trend, shifting to the right and away from the dominant party, using numerous criteria such as education, place of birth, ethnic origin, and age. Yishai (1985) suggests that the demise was due to growing resentment by the disadvantaged yet expanding sectors of the population, based on dissatisfaction with the institutions of the dominant party. The main rival, Herut (Likud’s predecessor), presented the appeal of upward mobility for the disadvantaged (both socially and politically), respect for religious principles (as opposed to the secular position of the dominant party), and hawkish patriotism on matters of security.

Israel’s victory in the 1967 war changed the very nature of party competition, which facilitated the end of domination. Due to Israel’s small size and the constant threat from its Arab neighbors, the population at large perceived the captured territories as a guarantee of strategic depth for Israel’s defense and hence supported Likud’s position on this issue. The rise of the security dimension thus pushed Labor (Mapai’s successor) out of the middle and toward the left, placed Likud as a legitimate ideological alternative, and granted the opposition wide public support on an issue that put the dominant party on the defensive. The 1967 war also brought to an end Labor’s previous domination of authority and exclusion of Likud; on the eve of the war Labor included Likud in an emergency national unity (grand coalition) government. This step not only made the opposition more acceptable in the eyes of the public, it also showed that the dominant party no longer felt it could monopolize power.

The rise of the security dimension also had an impact on the religious parties, who until then had played the role of loyal partners to the dominant party and had supported practically every coalition. After 1967, due to the religious-biblical significance of the captured territories, the religious parties either began to contemplate supporting Likud if it should win power (mainly the ultra-Orthodox) or altered their positions and began to move toward the right (the national religious). Therefore, the period following the Six-Day War, with the decrease in the number of seats won by Labor and the increase in seats won by Likud, was accompanied by the religious parties becoming both more important in the formation of coalitions and no longer automatically supportive of the Left.

The results of the 1973 election still allowed Labor to maintain its hold on power, but its dominance all but disappeared. Likud closed the gap to 10 percent of the seats and presented itself as a credible, viable alternative. Labor formed a minimal-winning coalition, instead of the usual oversized one that allowed the dominant party to play off its

partners against each other. The era of the parties perceiving themselves as possible correctives to the dominant party had clearly ended, and the era of possible political alternatives had arrived. Sartori (1976, p. 155) correctly notes that the results of the 1973 election “point to the emergence of a sizable, unified opposition and, therefore, to a possible trend toward a system based on alternative coalitions.”

The first successful attempt to dislodge the dominant party from its position was made in 1977, when Likud and the religious parties were able to form a coalition that excluded the dominant party for the first time. Duverger (1954, p. 308) said that in a multiparty system, the loss of power by the dominant party generally means the end of dominance. Since 1977 Labor has never been able to regain its dominant position, and the party system has changed to a new type with entirely different characteristics.

Party System B: Competitive Bipolarity in a Polarized Multiparty System

Since the 1981 election several trends have resulted in a bipolar characterization of the Israeli party system. First, the two major parties were separated by only a few seats—in two elections by only one seat. Second, the smaller parties began to be clearly identified with one of the two major parties, becoming “satellite” parties. Third, the size of the two blocs of parties was almost equal. The Israeli party system thus shifted to a competitive bipolar structure, resulting in a constellation similar to that of a two-party format, yet in a multiparty system. Figure 20.2 shows the election results for Israel until the mid-1990s, focusing on the two major parties. Table 20.3 shows the combined strength of the two main amalgamated groups, exhibiting the evident dualism of the party system in six

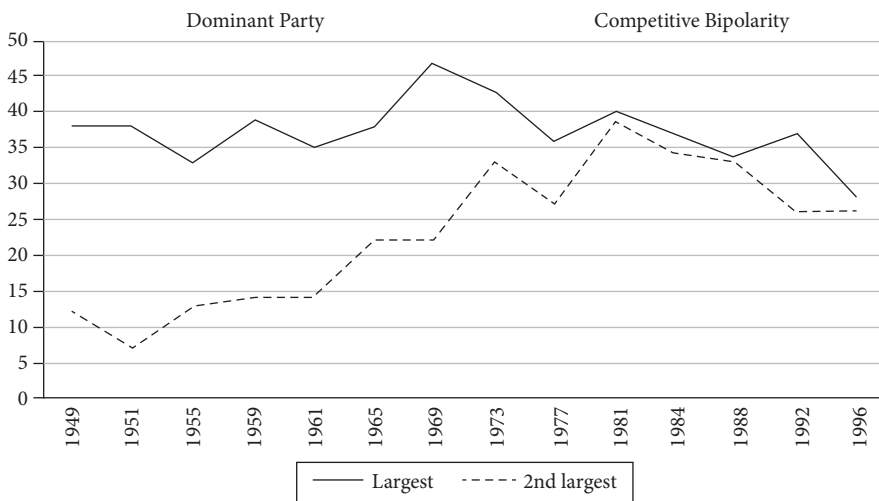


FIGURE 20.2 Percentage of seats won by the two major parties in Knesset elections, 1949–1996.

Source: Data retrieved from the Knesset website, http://knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res.htm

Table 20.3. Percentage of Seats Won by the Left and the Right in Knesset Elections, 1977–1996

Party Group	1977*	1981	1984	1988	1992	1996
Left	48	45	49	46	51	47
Right	52	55	51	54	49	53

Left = Left bloc + Arab bloc; Right = Right bloc + Orthodox bloc.

* The 15 seats won by the Democratic Movement for Change (DMC) are included in the Left.

Source: Data compiled from the Knesset website, http://knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res.htm

elections. Together these show how the Israeli party system became characterized by competitive bipolarity from the mid-1970s until the mid-1990s.

The advent of competitive bipolarity did not maintain the moderate mechanics of the party system. Two trends indicate the direction that the Israeli party system took in the 1980s. The first is the splintering of the two major parties, or the creation of entirely new parties, positioned “outside” of the two major parties—that is, more extremist—in practically every election.¹ The second trend is the failure to establish a viable center party. The numerous attempts to form center parties all fared poorly, and they were quickly absorbed into one of the two major parties or blocs of parties. Moreover, in the three elections held in the 1980s, apart from the two major parties, none of the others (eight in 1981, thirteen in both 1984 and 1988) won more than 5 percent of the seats. The Israeli party system, despite its apparent coalescence into two major blocs, thus came to exhibit heightened polarization between the two main camps and increased fragmentation within each camp.

Party System Change 2: Electoral Reform and Its Ramifications

In 1992 electoral reform was adopted in Israel through a revision of the Basic Law: The Government, making Israel the only parliamentary democracy to have separate and direct popular election of its prime minister as of 1996. The tenure of the directly elected prime minister was to be concurrent with that of the Knesset (four years), and they were elected simultaneously. The prime minister was elected according to the two-round absolute majority system. The Knesset continued to be elected by a closed list system of proportional representation, with the entire state serving as one constituency and the electoral threshold set at 1.5 percent (see the chapter by Shugart on the electoral system in this volume).²

The reforms in Israel aimed at consolidating the apparent direction of change in the Israeli party system—that is, to propel the party system further down the path toward

having two main parties. However, while the two main parties dominated the race for prime minister, due to the ability to split the ballot they both lost seats in the Knesset to more ideological and sectarian parties. In 1996 the number of seats won by the largest party (thirty-four) was the lowest in Israeli history, a trend that continued and intensified after the 1999 elections, in which the largest party won only twenty-six seats. The decline of the two major parties in 1996 (a loss of ten seats) was surpassed in the 1999 elections when they lost an additional twenty-one seats, bringing their combined strength to the lowest point in Israeli history (forty-five seats). This was the sharpest and most dramatic decline in the strength of the two major parties since the establishment of the state, and it reflected damage at the level of the party system that had hitherto been based on the existence of at least one, if not two, major parties. But now the largest party, the core of the government coalition, held less than one-fourth of the seats in the Knesset and hence constituted a minority within the coalition. The two largest parties no longer controlled a clear majority in the Knesset and would thus not even be able to join forces in a grand coalition to govern or advance particular policies, as they had done several times before.

These results quickly led to a reverse reform in 2001: the abolition of the direct election of the prime minister and the return to the previous electoral system. An analysis of the subsequent 2003 election results shows, as expected, an upward trend in the combined strength of the two major parties, which increased by twelve seats to fifty-seven, but this gain occurred completely in the largest party, which rose dramatically from twenty-six to thirty-eight. It should be pointed out, however, that in 2003 the second largest party continued to lose seats. Also, in 2006 the two largest parties declined once again. The partial reversal of the declining trends exhibited in 2003, after the electoral reform was annulled, were apparently only temporary.

Party System C: Dealignment?

The last twenty-five years have been nothing less than tumultuous for the Israeli party system. In 1996 Netanyahu/Likud won but could sustain a governing majority for just over two years. In 1999 Barak/Labor won but collapsed in under two years. In 2003 Likud won more seats than any other party during this entire period but then split, suffering its worst election defeat ever in 2006. In 2006 a new middle party, Kadima, won the elections. In 2009 Kadima also came in first but it was the second-placed party that formed a governing coalition (the first—and thus far the only—time this has occurred in Israeli political history); in 2013 it collapsed to only two seats. Likud came back in 2009 and has successfully maintained its governing position since, yet we should bear in mind that winning only one-quarter of the vote on average in six consecutive elections is not considered a clear victory for the ruling party in most democracies. Labor, the former dominant party, continued to decline in 2009 and in 2013, dropping to its lowest point ever; in 2015 it managed to recapture second place, but in 2019 and 2020 it collapsed and was on the verge of elimination. In 2019 and 2020 the new centrist Blue and White party replaced

Labor as Likud's competitor, but then split with part joining the Likud-led government and part leading the opposition. The center has apparently become a viable position, producing successful but volatile and vanishing parties.

The rise of the center in the last decade has been associated with the return of the socioeconomic dimension to prominence, although not to dominance. In the mid-1980s a Likud-Labor grand coalition provided political backing for a major economic reform to tackle hyperinflation. The reform also set the basis for the liberalization of the financial and capital markets, and the main macroeconomic objective shifted from full employment to price stability. This policy contributed to mounting economic inequalities, since relatively few Israelis benefited from it. During the first decade of the twenty-first century—after entitlements were slashed in 2003—poverty and inequality rates rose significantly. While this had been true in the past for two sectors that only partially participate in the labor market, the Israeli Arabs and the ultra-Orthodox Jews, more recent data show that poverty rose among working families in the general population. Israel then began to see a change in the economic perceptions of its population, especially from large sections of the middle class, which felt growing economic pressure. An increasing number of Israelis called for “social justice,” and massive protests took place under this banner in the summer of 2011. The continued rise in the cost of living and the lack of a comprehensive policy change by the government created an electoral shift that manifested in 2013 and 2015 in the appearance of two centrist, socioeconomic-focused parties. However, by the 2019 and 2020 elections one of these parties merged with a new center party that was concerned primarily with security issues and the other lost over 50 percent of its voters in 2019 and merged with Likud.

Security is still the first concern of both the voters and the parties, but it is now followed more closely by the economy and by parties that place this issue at the top of their agenda than by issues such as religion and the Arab minority. The social protests of 2011, and the elections of 2013 and 2015, did not bring about a sustained change. The mergers of Yesh Atid into Blue and White, with a security focus, and of Kulanu into Likud are a testimony of this. The ever-growing concern over the threat to Israel's survival emanating from the Iranian nuclear program and the expanding military power of Hezbollah and Hamas indicates that we are unlikely to see security replaced by socioeconomic concerns anytime soon. The resulting consequences for the current Israeli party system are that it is not just extremely multiparty; it is becoming extremely multidimensional as well.

The mergers and splits in the Israeli party system have also risen to an extreme level. In the 2019 and 2020 elections the parties to the right of Likud and to the left of Blue and White ran in multiple formations in each election—which were only a few months apart—which then split again or merged with other parties soon after the elections. That is, while the 2020 results show the lowest number of parties to ever win seats in the Knesset (eight), only a few weeks after, when the government was formed, this number increased by 50 percent.

In short, the confusing nature of Israeli party politics, which has confounded both foreign and local students, has produced a perception that confines Israel to a unique,

fluid, and perplexing category, excluded from most typologies. However, this situation is misleading, because Israeli politics was highly persistent, not unstable, during its first fifty years in two distinct time periods; it was only between these two that a realignment took place. This fifty-year period of stability came to a halt due largely to the electoral and political reforms adopted in the 1990s and their dramatic ramifications, which transformed and continue to impact the party system. No clear pattern has yet emerged from this volatile era. What has continued, even during this instability, is the decline of the political parties as the main actors in Israeli politics, together with the growth of personalized politics and the impact of nonparty actors. In other words, while the first phase of change in the 1970s was short, occurring between two periods of stable party politics—a realignment according to Shamir (1986)—the last twenty-five years have produced not just a prolonged period of instability, but if this continues we could possibly witness the dealignment of the Israeli party system (Arian & Shamir, 2001). This is all the more concerning because the main parties in Israel, based on comparative measures, have suffered the most extreme decline among the established democracies (Kenig & Knafelman, 2013; Kenig & Tuttnauer, 2017).³ The last, ongoing phase of the Israeli party system thus exhibits the instability that has traditionally, and incorrectly, been attributed to the party system in general.

CONCLUSION: PARTY AND PARTY SYSTEM CHANGE IN ISRAEL

The Israeli party system during the era of domination had one large, mass party. But the deterioration of Mapai's ideological doctrinism and its adoption of catch-all tactics heralded the collapse of both the dominant ideology and the dominant party. The decline of ideology helped reduce the differentiation between the two main parties, ushering in the demise of domination. In its wake, the Israeli party system in the era of competitive bipolarity came to possess two large catch-all parties (Kirchheimer, 1966). The rise of the security dimension, however, recreated a distinct difference between the two major parties. This became apparent after 1977, when Egypt began to talk peace with Israel and the prospect of exchanging territories for peace became realistic. Moreover, with the rise of individualism in Israeli culture, supplanting collectivism as the prevailing ethos, the ideological domination of the Left not only disappeared but was replaced by a civic culture that belongs more to the Right than to the Left. Israeli politics became more competitive but at the same time more polarized.

The electoral-political reform in the 1990s, meant to strengthen the hold on power of the two main parties, alongside other reforms in party funding and the legal threshold, showed that the catch-all parties were transforming into cartel parties. The continued loss of seats for these parties, together with the increase in the sectarian parties' share of seats and the more recent emphasis on personalized politics in a party-focused political

system, exhibit the current uneasy coexistence of an intriguing mix of cadre, catch-all, cartel, and post-cartel sectarian parties in the Israeli party system (Yishai, 2001). The legitimacy of parties, and the identity of voters, appears to be based on their association with a specific bloc as much as on an ideology or the representation of Israeli society.

From all possible perspectives, the Israeli party system of the 1950s and 1960s was dramatically different from that of the 1980s and 1990s, with the interim phase of the mid-1970s representing a period of change. The central elements of the Israeli party system during the first three decades were (1) Mapai's dominance, (2) socioeconomic issues, and (3) the existence of satellite coalition partners in the Left bloc. All three factors then went through an extensive, but rather short, transformation in the mid-1970s, leading to a second period of twenty plus years characterized by (1) parity between Likud and Labor, (2) the dominance of security issues, and (3) the potential coalition partners for the two major parties being the parties on their respective extremes. It would thus be correct to argue that the Israeli party system underwent a realignment.

More recently, the central elements of the Israeli party system have been comprehensively undermined. Labor and Likud are no longer the two main parties after each election. Most coalitions must include both the more extreme parties and some of the parties in a new, fifth bloc located in the center and highly fluid. Israel's largest minority group, the Israeli Arabs, came together and became the third largest party. This second phase of systemic change, which began back in the 1990s, continues today and has ushered in a protracted era of instability. This transformation is not a short realignment; it is not between two periods of relative stability, and thus it leads us to conclude with an unanswered question: Whither Israel's political parties and its party system?

NOTES

1. In 1981 Tehiya split from Likud and positioned itself to the right of Likud. In 1984 Kach occupied the extreme right position, while the PLP (Progressive List for Peace) occupied a position further to the left of Labor. In 1988 Kach was outlawed, but most of its extremist policies were adopted by a new party called Moledet; Tsomet was created to the right of Likud; and Mapam broke off from Labor and moved to its left.
2. The revised Basic Law not only effectively altered the electoral system but also changed the entire political system in Israel to a mixed form of parliamentarism and presidentialism (Hazan, 1996). The separately and directly elected prime minister had the power to nominate the cabinet, as in presidential democracies. However, a parliamentary vote of investiture was necessary before the cabinet could take office, and the Knesset could oust the prime minister through a vote of no confidence (which required only a bare majority), similar to parliamentary systems.
3. Kenig and Knafelman (2013) use several measures—such as electoral volatility, effective number of parties, support for the main parties, voter turnout in elections, party membership, and trust in political parties—in a cross-national comparison of twenty countries

between the 1970s and the first decade of the twenty-first century. They find that Israel scores the worst in half of the measures and is among the worst in the rest. No other country shows a concentration of such extremely negative scores, leading the authors to argue that the decline of the main parties in Israel is comparatively sharper than in any other democracy. Kenig and Tuttnauer (2017) find similar results based on data through the 2015 elections.

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CHAPTER 21

BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS IN ISRAEL

SHARON GILAD AND NISSIM COHEN

THE influence of nonelected bureaucrats over public policy poses a fundamental challenge to democracy. The concern is that bureaucrats exploit their access to information and expertise to undercut the elected politicians and the public's will. As in many other countries around the world, in Israel the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Finance (MOF) are considered powerful players in the public policy arena. Despite their important role and the fact that without them it might be difficult to maintain a responsible and balanced budget, these bureaucrats are criticized for wielding excessive political power and for exercising controversial strategies (Cohen, 2013).

Research on Israeli public policy and administration points to the MOF in general, and to its Budget Unit in particular, as pivotal players not only in the budget process but also in substantive policymaking across policy domains (Cohen, 2015). Maman and Rosenhek (2017, p. 65), for example, write about the MOF:

The vast political and institutional resources at its disposal have enabled it on the one hand to advance reforms in which it was interested, and on the other to prevent institutional changes which it opposed... in virtually all policy domains, from social policy to numerous domains of economic policy, including taxation, encouraging capital investment, finance and trade.

Other research firmly demonstrates that the Israeli MOF's control over the budgeting process is extreme in comparative perspective (Ben-Bassat & Dahan, 2006; Dahan, 2016). The MOF not only exerts significant control over the details of government ministries' budget plans, but its authorization is required for minute changes in budget allocations within the boundaries of the existing annual budget. As Cohen's (2013) empirical findings show, alongside bureaucrats' expertise, strategies based on concealment, manipulation of information, lack of transparency, and "buying" politicians ("bribe for budgets") establish the dominance of the MOF's bureaucrats in the policy

arena. Moreover, other MOF units control the ministries' number of personnel, as well as the salaries associated with specific government positions and ranks.

Such a concentration of power in the hands of one powerful bureaucratic player is problematic in democratic terms and arguably renders the Israeli government relatively unresponsive to public demands, and in some cases significantly weakens the legal protection of the right to public services (Sperling & Cohen, 2012). Moreover, comparative research by Dahan (2016) suggests that the excessive concentration of power in the hands of the MOF and other central units, such as the Civil Service Commission at the Prime Minister's Office, and the resulting debilitation of government ministries and levels of government undermine the effectiveness of the Israeli public sector.

Driven by these concerns, this chapter offers Allison's (1971) "bureaucratic politics" and Tsebelis's (1995) concept of "veto players" as intertwined theoretical lenses to explain how the MOF acquired its dominant position, the boundaries of its power, and most puzzling, politicians' disinclination or incapacity to divest it of its powers. We start by delineating a theory of two-tiered bureaucratic politics (Gilad et al., 2019) whereby government policies reflect the struggle and power relations among the divergent interests and visions of multiple bureaucratic units, nested within political competition between parties and political elites. Government decision-making structures, which shape and constrain bureaucratic politics, are themselves reflections of ad hoc constellations of bureaucratic endeavors and compromises among distinct political veto players. Once in place, such decision-making structures endow certain bureaucratic actors with a sustained advantage in future bureaucratic politics. However, this advantage is unstable and contingent upon the continued interest and support of key political veto players and could be lost in its absence.

Empirically, building on extant research, we trace the historical roots of the decision-making structures that endowed the Israeli MOF with excessive budgeting and policymaking powers: the Budget Foundations Law and the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law. Employing the two-tiered bureaucratic politics lens, we show that the MOF's privileged position is far from absolute. Rather, it is contingent upon the simultaneous support of two veto players, the finance minister (FM) and the prime minister (PM). We tentatively propose that the MOF generally enjoys the political support of the FM and the PM, so long as both are from the same party, since supporting the MOF serves the PM and his or her party's capacity to exert control over an increasingly fragmented coalitional government. The MOF's powers partially buffer the PM and the FM, and their party elites, against demands from coalition partners for benefits for their respective constituencies. Moreover, the MOF's structurally advantaged position empowers the FM and the PM as the ultimate adjudicators between the MOF and other ministries and ministers.

We propose that the MOF's centrality not only reflects its astute bureaucratic strategies (Cohen, 2013; Koreh & Shalev, 2017; Maman & Rosenhek, 2011, 2017), existing structures (Ben-Bassat & Dahan, 2006; Cohen, 2015; Dahan, 2016), or the prestige of the economic profession (Mandelkern, 2017; Mandelkern & Shalev, 2010), but is also sustained by and conditional upon political elites' pursuit of control amid unstable, frag-

mented, coalition governments (see the chapter in this volume by Hazan on the parties and party system).

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND STRUCTURE AS A PRODUCT OF TWO-TIERED BUREAUCRATIC AND POLITICAL STRUGGLES

The focus of this chapter on the dominance of the MOF in both budgeting and policy-making points our gaze in the direction of a “bureaucratic politics” model (Allison, 1971; Allison & Halperin, 1972). According to this model, government actions are political rather than the product of a purely rational cost-benefit analysis. Unlike the rational actor model and the organizational process model, this perspective introduces the concepts of the role and position of bureaucrats and their bargaining power, organizational mission, and essence into the discourse about decision-making. According to this model, players are expected to favor policy options that fulfill their bureaucratic role and enhance their power and influence in the decision-making process. Their stands on various issues are largely determined by their position within the government and associated bureaucratic roles. Hence, two factors are crucial for determining who controls policymaking and what the policy outcome is: the *role of the player* and the *distribution of authority* (Allison, 1971). We add to this perspective by stressing the two-tiered structure of competition between bureaus and political elites (Gilad et al., 2019) as well as the significance of veto players, that is, players whose formal consent is required for significant policy change (Tsebelis, 1995).

A bureaucratic politics viewpoint highlights the diversity of perspectives and interests within government. Senior bureaucrats, of different bureaus, are inclined to interpret the world through institutionalized problem frames, rooted in their organizations’ distinct missions, or ethos (Allison & Halperin, 1972; Gilad, 2008, 2015; Hall, 1983; Wilson, 1989), and their institutional pursuit of reputation and autonomy (Carpenter, 2001, 2010). For example, social-security bureaus may seek to pursue and safeguard universal provision of social services, whereas finance ministries may strive to maximize their control over government spending and to restrain unforeseen government liabilities (Koreh & Shalev, 2017). Bureaucrats, moreover, tend to develop emotional commitments to existing policy programs and instruments based on established paradigms (Hall, 1993). Consequently, bureaus’ struggling, bargaining, and compromising in pursuit of certain policy initiatives over others, and in response to policy initiatives by other bureaus, are directed by their attempt to advance and protect their distinct missions, reputations, and autonomy.

Peters (1987) goes as far as to suggest that bureaucrats dominate the policy process because of their expertise, making the role of political leaders marginal. In many cases

bureaucrats have a strong incentive to expand the organization to shore up their power and position, which is why they try to maximize their budgets (Niskanen, 1971). Hence, politicians and bureaucrats usually interact in a world of asymmetrical information. However, politicians sometimes seek and find ways to overcome the expertise-based manipulations of bureaucrats (Bendor et al., 1987).

The struggling, bargaining, and compromising between bureaucrats and bureaus are nested within political cooperation and competition between politicians and parties (Gilad et al., 2019). Politicians, at least those holding a central position within the executive political hierarchy, such as presidents in presidential systems and prime ministers in parliamentary democracies, have formal powers and means to control the bureaucracy (Wood & Waterman, 1991, 1994). Electoral costs and gains, and at times ideology, shape the readiness of elected politicians to overhaul bureaucrats' typically stable understanding of policy problems and incremental formulation of solutions. The exogenous salience of an issue in public opinion, coupled with the potential for electoral gains, may enhance the politicians' will to intervene (Baekgaard et al., 2015). Yet in the absence of clear incentives, politicians have limited motivation to involve themselves in bureaus' competition over policy formulation. Furthermore, we propose that in multiparty coalitions, such as exist in Israel, powerful politicians may be inclined to buttress the power of dominant bureaucracies in order to buffer themselves against the demands of their coalition partners.

Weakly positioned politicians—those representing peripheral parties and holding less prestigious portfolios in broad coalitions—may be unable, on their own, to overpower advantaged bureaucracies, so long as the latter enjoy the support of political veto players. Thus the policy preferences of peripheral politicians may prevail only if they are capable of enlisting the support of key politicians or are successful in building collaboration with other political elites, transcending differences in interests and ideology. Such a winning collaboration, however, is typically inhibited by the number of institutional and coalition veto players and the ideological distance that separates them (Tsebelis, 1995).

The preceding analysis suggests that politicians, due to a lack of electoral incentives or as a result of collective action costs, more often than not forgo intervention in bureaus' policy struggles, leaving bureaucrats to coordinate on their own (Gilad et al., 2019). Under these conditions bureaus' relative success in advancing their policy initiatives or blocking unwelcome initiatives by other bureaus is shaped by their position within an existing government hierarchy. Institutional rules of the game play a pivotal role in structuring the hierarchical dynamics of interbureau politics, so certain bureaus and bureaucrats gain uneven access to the policymaking process and wield unequal influence (e.g., Hartlapp et al., 2013). Moreover, these institutions, which afford some bureaus sustained advantage in the realm of bureau competition over policy, are themselves a function of two-tiered bureaucratic politics reflecting a historical political compromise, a change in which entails a shift in the constellation of political veto players.

Given bureaus' institutionalized hierarchy, bureaucratic politics, in the absence of intervention by powerful politicians, tends to result in consensus-seeking dynamics, by

which we mean “low intensity [bargaining], with relatively few players whose views and interests diverge only gradually, bargaining towards consensus within a closed policy arena featuring clear rules of the game and a relatively transparent power structure” (Preston & T’Hart, 1999, p. 55). Less-advantaged bureaus are generally compelled to accept compromises or see their goals completely ignored and excluded (Gilad et al., 2019). In the Israeli case the MOF enjoys such sustained advantage due to institutional structures that endow it with advanced access and control over the policymaking process, compelling other bureaus to compromise (Cohen, 2013).

Nevertheless, the problem frames and preferred solutions of weakly positioned bureaus and politicians may prevail if and when powerful political veto players, given electoral incentives or ideological concerns, choose to step into the bureaucratic politics arena, and/or if weakly positioned players forge a winning coalition. Such rare instances of political intervention, moreover, may result in changes to the very institutional structures that provide some bureaus and politicians with sustained advantage over others. At such times we would expect generally excluded bureaus and politicians to engage in “confrontation characterized by many players, vigorously pushing their parochial viewpoints in a relatively open and ill-structured constellation of forces” (Preston & T’Hart, 1999, pp. 55–56).

Hence, we claim that government policies and institutional structures are by products of two-tiered bureaucratic politics dynamics in which the policy preferences of institutionally advantaged bureaus prevail only so long as politicians choose to, or are compelled to, remain offstage. Conversely, when powerful politicians choose to intervene on behalf of marginal bureaus, or when weakly positioned politicians successfully coordinate, overcoming their differences, powerful bureaus may find themselves forced to compromise against their will.

THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE’S INSTITUTIONALIZED ADVANTAGE

The MOF as we know it today enjoys clear structural advantage in its relationship with other bureaus and weakly positioned politicians, which allows it to advance its dual ethos of fiscal restraint alongside reforms that are intended to instill competition and market mechanisms into the Israeli public and private sectors. However, this was not always the case. The story of the MOF’s institutional empowerment, amid the government’s response to the 1980s hyperinflation crisis, has been told many times (e.g., Ben-Bassat & Dahan, 2006; Cohen, 2015; Maman & Rosenhek, 2017; Mandelkern, 2017; Nahmias & Klein, 1999). This story, which we briefly reiterate here, emphasizes the MOF’s strategic role in obtaining its advantaged institutional position and the circumstances that led

other veto players, most notably powerful politicians, to acquiesce in this rebalancing of power.

The MOF's preference for attaining economic growth via market competition, as opposed to Israel's traditional developmental-state arrangement, has been molded from day one by its founders' strong linkage to the Hebrew University's Department of Economics (Mandelken, 2017). Despite a few wins for its liberal ethos, between 1948 and the mid-1980s the MOF was compelled to support the developmental state's efforts to attain economic development and full employment through state- and semi-state-owned corporations and state financing of large privately owned businesses (Maman & Rosenhek, 2017). At the forefront of these efforts were developmental ministries, such as the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Housing and Construction (hereafter the Ministry of Housing), and the Ministry of Agriculture.

The mid-1970s and early 1980s saw the failure of the developmental state. Economic growth declined; inflation rose rapidly, reaching startling levels by the mid-1980s; and government debt and the budget deficit expanded dramatically. Unionized workers' demands for wage increases to compensate for the erosion of their salaries were met by employers' requests for further state subsidies and support and by government devaluation of the local currency to improve the trade balance (Mandelkern, 2017). Attempts to control hyperinflation through "package deals" among the MOF, the peak workers' association, the Histadrut, and the peak business association failed. From the MOF's perspective, these circumstances amounted to a loss of control over the state's budget deficit and currency.

The 1985 Stabilization Plan, which is the source of the MOF's structural advantage to date, evolved out of this economic turmoil. The depth of the economic crisis generated widespread political support for extreme policy measures, which became possible with the formation, in 1984, of a very large cross-party grand coalition (it included 102 of the 120 members of the Israeli parliament, the Knesset). This cross-party backing gave a relatively free hand to a liberal, bureaucratic-professional coalition comprising the MOF, the Bank of Israel, and senior Israeli economists in academia, backed by no less than the US government; together they formulated and pushed for radical policy and structural change. The consensus among these professional players resulted in their policy advice almost being taken for granted (Mandelkern, 2017).

Among the many provisions of the Economic Stabilization Plan were structural components that came to transform the power relations between the MOF and other ministries (Cohen, 2013). First, the Budget Foundations Law, and subsequent secondary legislation, empowered the MOF to centrally manage the other ministries' budget design and spending. These powers were further augmented in 1992 by the Budget Deficit Reduction Law, which institutionalized a gradual reduction in the national deficit. Second, the Bank of Israel was prohibited from lending money to the government and was awarded centralized power over monetary policy. As suggested by Maman and Rosenhek (2017), by constraining itself and agreeing to shift power to the relatively autonomous Bank of Israel, thereby tying its own hands, the MOF mitigated its vulnerability to future political, bureaucratic, and corporate pressures to provide capital to

loss-making enterprises and to devalue the local currency to aid Israeli exporters. This in turn allowed the MOF to regain fiscal control while relying on the Bank of Israel's professional monetary policy. Third, the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law, which accompanied the 1985 Economic Stabilization Plan, provided a legal platform for its economic provisions (Cohen, 2015; Mizrahi & Cohen, 2012).

The Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law, like some of the other measures in the Stabilization Plan, was originally intended as a one-off, emergency measure. Yet it has accompanied the MOF's annual budget proposals and economic plans since 1985. Moreover, whereas the 1985 Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law had only 35 sections, which were directly related to the economic emergency plan, at its peak in 2009 it comprised no less than 185 sections and many subsections, including hundreds of pages of legal provisions relating to all aspects of policy, many of which have remote, if any, relevance to the MOF's economic plan.

The proposed decisions and provisions in the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law are developed by the MOF, often including decisions that were rejected by previous governments. One can assume that the PM and the FM are at least briefed in advance to ensure their backup and support, as is the case in relation to the budget proposal and the economic plan more generally (Ben-Bassat & Dahan, 2006). Other ministries and their ministers, however, receive the proposed decisions only a few days before they are put before the cabinet for formal decision, allowing them limited opportunity to study decisions that directly affect their ministries and no time to consider the indirect implications of provisions in other domains. Thereafter, the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Bill and the MOF's budget proposal and economic plan are put before the government for its swift authorization, as a joint set of decisions and legislative provisions. This procedure is repeated in the Knesset, where the Finance Committee discusses the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Bill alongside the state's annual budget under severe time limitations, thereby divesting the other issue-specific committees of the opportunity to scrutinize its numerous provisions. Parliamentarians and academics, among others, have criticized the unconstitutional nature of the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law, yet its deployment by the MOF persists (Cohen, 2015; Sperling & Cohen, 2012).

Our theoretical perspective suggests that the stability and expansion of the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law, despite much criticism, reflect not only the MOF's power but also the incentives of powerful politicians. Partial support for our proposition comes from an analysis by Nahmias and Klein (1999), which tentatively confirms that the number of provisions in the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law increases with the number of parties in the government's coalition and the ideological distance between them. In other words, as the number of veto players within the coalition rises, and the PM and his or her ruling party face increasing constraints on their capacity to advance their policy agenda, their inclination to enable the MOF to exploit its institutionalized power becomes greater. The next section provides further support for the political underpinning of the MOF's power, showing that its dominance is conditioned by the PM's and FM's nonintervention on behalf of other ministries and weakly positioned politicians.

THE UNSTABLE AND CONTINGENT POWER OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Institutional structures—the Budget Foundations Law and the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law—endow the MOF with a privileged position in interbureau struggles, leading less-advantaged bureaus and politicians to opt for compromise over confrontation. Yet the two-tiered bureaucratic politics framework suggests that the MOF can exploit its institutionally advantaged position only so long as political elites, specifically those holding pivotal positions—the PM and FM—*choose* to jointly refrain from intervening on behalf of other ministries or weakly positioned politicians. The studies presented in this section firmly demonstrate the politically contingent nature of the MOF's dominance.

Against the common portrayal of systematic retrenchment of the Israeli welfare state and the alleged hegemony of the MOF and its neoliberal ethos, Asiskovitch (2007, 2017) depicts a more nuanced, mixed picture that resonates with a two-tiered bureaucratic politics framework. One of his case studies features the long-term struggle between the MOF and the National Insurance Institute (NII) over the child allowances program. The NII is a statutory body that provides all Israeli citizens with basic, universal allowances and manages citizens' claims for means-tested benefits. In 1984–1985, against NII's objections, the MOF, empowered by cross-party political support for managing the economic crisis and its implications for the budget deficit, successfully introduced means testing and taxation of the formerly universal child allowances paid to “small” families (those with up to three children). In 1994, however, following the election of the Rabin administration, the NII attained the PM's and FM's support for the restoration of these same universal child allowance benefits. Then again, in 2003, with the vigorous support of a favorable FM—Benjamin Netanyahu—the MOF advanced the retrenchment of the child allowances, alongside other NII schemes, this time by cutting enlarged payments to large families—mostly ultra-orthodox and Israeli Palestinians—with four or more children. This history of the child allowances program effectively illustrates the two-tiered structure of bureaucratic politics, wherein the outcome of the MOF's and the NII's struggles over policy changed given the ideological position of the PM and the FM and their interrelations with other political players—most notably the ultra-orthodox parties, which favor support for large families and have been partners in most Israeli coalition governments.

Asiskovitch's (2007, 2017) second case study regards the Universal Health Care Law of 1995, which introduced a system whereby all citizens pay a healthcare insurance tax and the MOF allocates funds among four competing Sick Funds in accordance with a uniform package of services and the number of clients that they serve. The 1995 law replaced a former system of informal bargaining between the MOF and the Histadrut, the then owner of the monopolistic General Sick Fund. The Ministry of Health was relatively marginalized in that previous regime, whereas the 1995 law assigned it the authority to

specify the services to be covered or subsidized by the state and to be the regulator of the Sick Funds. Consequently, whereas the MOF opposed the legislation of a uniform services package, which it perceived as a fiscal risk, the Ministry of Health was among its enthusiastic champions. In this clash the MOF was overpowered, *inter alia* because the then FM (Avraham Shochat)—given his political alliances with sections within the Labor Party that advocated the weakening of the Histadrut—supported the law. Thus, MOF officials “were obliged to participate and help bring the legislative process to a successful completion against their institutional interest of fiscal control” (Asiskovitch, 2017, p. 131). Consequently, they engaged in negotiation and compromise with the Ministry of Health over the precise details of the reform. Still, Asiskovitch (2017) finds that once the interest of politicians diminished the power of the MOF increased, allowing it to introduce amendments to the 1995 law through the vehicle of the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law, despite opposition from the Ministry of Health and the Sick Funds. This dynamic, again, confirms our proposition that the MOF enjoys an institutionalized advantage *vis-à-vis* other bureaus and weakly positioned politicians, yet it loses its lead and is compelled to compromise whenever the PM or FM is motivated to intervene on behalf of other players.

Pursuit of autonomy and power are also among the consistent findings of studies by Alon-Barkat and Gilad regarding bureaus’ responses to the unprecedented mass social protests of the summer of 2011 (Alon-Barkat & Gilad, 2016; Gilad & Alon-Barkat, 2018; Gilad et al., 2016, 2019). Their analysis of the struggle between the MOF and the Ministry of Housing over reductions in the price of state-owned land in tenders administered by the Israel Land Administration is a prime example of the MOF’s politically contingent dominance.

As described by Gilad et al. (2019), from 2007 housing prices began to soar. This eventually became one of the triggers for the mass social protests that erupted in the summer of 2011, when hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens went out into the streets demanding changes in Israeli social policy and the rebuilding of the welfare state. Never before had any public uprising been fomented against the successful neoliberal regime. On the macro level, Israel’s economic situation was impressive, boasting low unemployment, a strong local currency, significant foreign investments, and stable economic growth. Yet despite these favorable macroeconomic conditions, research conducted in 2008 shows that the Israeli public wanted greater state supply of public services and investment in welfare services provision and recognized the obligation to support those in need (Cohen et al., 2011).

The state, operating through the Israel Land Administration, is the main owner of land in Israel. The Ministry of Housing perceived the Land Administration’s sale (or more accurately, long-term leasing) of state-owned land for the highest bid offered by land developers as a significant culprit in the escalating price of housing. From the MOF’s perspective, conversely, selling state-owned land to the highest bidder had the favorable outcome of producing higher state revenues.

Between 2009 and the eruption of the social protests in 2011, the Ministry of Housing—led by Minister Ariel Atias of Shas, one of the ultra-orthodox parties in PM

Netanyahu's coalition—made only incremental progress in its attempts to revamp the government's guidelines for tendering of state-owned land. Given the MOF's advantaged position and the support that it enjoyed from the then FM and PM, the efforts of Atias and the Ministry of Housing failed to shift the status quo. Thus, Atias and the senior bureaucrats of the Ministry of Housing were compelled to engage in compromise with the MOF to attain its agreement to measures that did not pose significant threats to state revenue. Among these was a decision that the price of state land in a few designated projects for first-time buyers would be set according to an independent surveyor's professional assessment, as opposed to the developers' highest bid, and sold to the developer who would offer the lowest end price for the designated housing units.

Following the social protests of 2011, housing prices were elevated to the center of both public and media attention, posing a critical threat to the electoral survival of PM Netanyahu's government. Atias was therefore in a stronger position to win Netanyahu's support and to coerce the MOF to agree to the Ministry of Housing's ongoing demand for reductions in the price of state land in designated state tenders. Nonetheless, at this point the MOF still enjoyed the support of and cooperation between the then FM (Yuval Steinitz) and the PM, who were close Likud Party allies. Conversely, following the 2013 elections the political will to intervene in the price of housing dramatically increased, while cooperation between the FM and the PM was significantly severed. The new FM (Yair Lapid) and head of the center-left Yesh Atid Party was strongly committed—given his party's electoral campaign agenda—to reforms in pursuit of lowering the price of housing. Driving such reforms, independently of Netanyahu and the Likud, was essential for Yesh Atid and Lapid's future appeal to the electorate. Under these conditions the Ministry of Housing, under its new minister (Uri Ariel)—a member of the Jewish Home Party, located on the Far Right but working in cooperation with Yesh Atid—was in a unique position to enlist the FM's support for dramatic and costly policy reforms against his own bureaucracy. The Ministry of Housing's extensive reform package, which was approved by the cabinet, included the significant expansion of state tenders in which land was sold to developers at 50 percent of its price, incentives for local authorities to enable affordable-housing projects within their jurisdictions, promotion of low-cost rental housing projects, and enhanced government involvement in urban renewal projects. The MOF's bureaucracy vehemently resisted further reductions to the price of state land. Yet the FM endorsed many of the Ministry of Housing's requests, against the opposition of the MOF bureaucracy. One interviewee, cited in Gilad et al. (2019), remarked on the implications of the cooperation between Lapid and Ariel for the Ministry of Housing's empowerment vis-à-vis the MOF during this period:

[Until the 2013 elections], the [Housing] Ministry had to manage with [what it could get from] the Budget Unit.... Whereas with this government.... There is an attention and inclination to advance grand, long-term, policy programs. [The difference has to do with the] entrance of a new Finance Minister, who is very committed to the issue.... and a Housing Minister, who are well coordinated.... and are operating a housing policy.... [which is] somewhat independent of the PM and his party's priorities.

Taken together, these studies support our point that the MOF's privileged position in the policy domain is underpinned by the Israeli PMs' and FM's general disinclination to intervene in conflicts between the MOF and other bureaus and politicians. Such disinclination, we claim, is most likely when the PM and FM are members of the same party, which thereby increases their probable collaboration against requests from members of other parties. This analysis leads us to argue that the PM and FM generally choose to allow the MOF to exploit its advantage vis-à-vis other players, since the MOF's centrality solves their own political problem of limited control over the increasingly fragmented coalition governments.

CONCLUSION: BRINGING POLITICIANS INTO THE ANALYSIS OF BUREAUCRATIC AUTONOMY AND POWER

The Israeli MOF's domination of the budget and policymaking processes is extreme in comparative perspective and among the most salient characteristics of the Israeli public sector. This extreme centralization of power has grave implications for the capacity of other bureaus to deploy their expertise and experience to respond to societal problems and changing public demands within their respective domains. It further undermines the responsiveness of the ministers who head these bureaus to their respective electoral constituencies. The question then becomes why, more than thirty years after the Economic Stabilization Plan, political elites allow the MOF to hold onto its expansive institutional powers.

This study proposes two intertwined answers to this puzzle. Our first insight is that the MOF is not as politically autonomous as it may seem, as became obvious during the recent Covid-19 pandemic, wherein the MOF has lost much of its leading position due to the PM's choice to side with the concerns of the Ministry of Health. The MOF's capacity to exploit its advantaged institutional position in the policymaking process is dependent on the PM's and the FM's support and on other politicians' failure to cooperate with one another and thereby yield collective veto power. Our second proposition is that the stability of the MOF's institutional advantage may be attributed to the enduring interest of Israeli PMs in alleviating their difficulty in pursuing coherent policy agendas due to increasingly complex and fragile coalition governments. Together, these insights challenge current analyses of the Israeli public sector, which recognize that the MOF is not omnipotent yet in practice seldom analyze the boundaries of its powers and tend to understate the strategic agency of politicians (but see Asiskovitch, 2007, 2017; Gilad et al., 2019).

Commencing with our first insight, the two-tiered bureaucratic politics perspective (Gilad et al., 2019), on which this chapter is built, proposes that the outcome of bargains between the MOF and other bureaus is simultaneously shaped by its advantaged

institutional position and the fluctuating scope for bargains and compromises at the political-executive level. This dynamic further depends on whether the MOF seeks to initiate policy change or to buffer itself against policy initiatives by other bureaus.

When other bureaus seek to initiate policy reforms in pursuit of their bureaucratic missions, they normally require the MOF's consent, since the Budget Foundations Law endows it with veto power over even small budgetary decisions. If the MOF objects to the proposed policy change, ministers may choose to escalate the conflict on behalf of their bureaus to the FM and/or the PM. Thus, the MOF's formal institutional veto power vests the PM and the FM with an informal veto power as the ultimate adjudicators between the MOF and other bureaus and their ministers. If the PM and the FM choose to forgo intervention, as is often the case, the contending bureaus are forced to compromise with the MOF on its terms.

Hence, the Budget Foundations Law bestows on the MOF a powerful position in relation to the other bureaus' policy initiatives, yet its veto power is contingent upon the PM's and the FM's disinclination to intervene on behalf of other players. Our empirical analysis in this chapter shows that when the PM or the FM chose to endorse the demands of the other bureaus or of political allies—based on ideological, coalition, or electoral considerations—the MOF was compelled to collaborate. We further propose that the MOF is more vulnerable when the PM and the FM are from different parties, which results in less coordination between them and thereby greater scope for other ministers to attain support for their bureaus' positions from at least one of these key players.

When seeking to initiate policy change in pursuit of its own liberal agenda, the MOF relies on the structural advantage of the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law. The latter, as we have explained, offers the benefit of bundling a large number of policy proposals and putting them before the other bureaus, their ministers, and thereafter the Knesset's Finance Committee—as opposed to the separate, specialized Knesset committees—for a hasty decision, alongside the MOF's budget proposal and economic plan.

Nevertheless, to successfully pursue its policy initiatives the MOF needs to cooperate with and satisfy multiple veto players. First, the MOF's cooperation with the PM and the FM is vital, since it requires their dual support vis-à-vis their party and coalition partners in government and the Knesset. Second, and related, other bureaus, represented by their ministers and by the chair of the Knesset Finance Committee, may remove their support from the budget unless certain provisions are detached from the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law. If a majority among the ministers cooperate, overcoming their ideological differences and their bureaus' conflicts, or if the MOF fears the emergence of such a cross-bureau alliance, the MOF may find itself compelled to compromise, yielding to the other bureaus' preferred policies and related budget requests in exchange for their support for its own policy initiatives.

Even so, the MOF's salient policy successes, and other bureaus' relegation, suggest that the PM and FM seldom intervene on behalf of other bureaus. Moreover, the MOF's exploitation of the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law has expanded over time, although not consistently, suggesting that it enjoys vigorous political support. Why then do the PM and FM normally refrain from intervening on behalf of other ministers, and why have they allowed the MOF to use the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Law so extensively?

Our answers to these questions should be obvious. The extreme multiparty coalition governments in Israel result in PMs having no interest in a delegation of powers from the MOF to other bureaus, because this would weaken their already feeble control over the government's budget allocation and policy agenda. The concentration of power in the hands of the MOF, conversely, allows the PM relative control over the budget and policy (cf. Nahmias & Klein, 1999). Moreover, centralized MOF power protects the PM against excessive demands from his or her coalition partners on behalf of sectors and agendas that their parties represent. This latter argument is consistent with the findings of extant research showing that centralized budget control moderates the effects of multiparty coalitions on governments' budget deficits (De Haan et al., 2013; Martin & Vanberg, 2013).

Our argument notwithstanding, this chapter points to the need for further research. First, our claim that the sustained institutional and de facto advantage of the MOF rests on the PM's attempt to rule over unmanageable coalition governments requires systematic operationalization and empirical analysis. A preliminary attempt to assess a similar claim was conducted by Nahmias and Klein (1999), who gauged the association among the number of parties in the Israeli government's coalitions, their ideological distance, and the length of the Omnibus Economic Arrangements Laws.

Second, if we are correct that the MOF's institutional veto power ultimately empowers the PM, then Netanyahu's delegation of direct control over the MOF to his coalition partners—Yesh Atid and then Kulanu—should have weakened not only his policy direction but also the de facto advantage of the MOF vis-à-vis other bureaus. The latter, as we suggest, were in a better position to elicit the support of either the PM *or* the FM, exploiting their ideological conflicts and political competition. Whether or not this was in fact the case is an empirical question.

Finally, transcending the Israeli case, extant research suggests that centralized budget power mitigates the effects of fragmented coalition governments on states' budget deficits (De Haan et al., 2013; Martin & Vanberg, 2013). To the best of our knowledge, however, current research does not assess the association between the relative complexity of coalition governments (an independent variable) and the centralization of the budgetary and policymaking process (a dependent variable). Comparing the budget and policymaking system of Israel with that of other multiparty systems and coalition governments may provide further insights about the political underpinnings of bureaucratic power.

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CHAPTER 22

POLITICAL REFORM IN ISRAEL

GIDEON RAHAT

SINCE its establishment in 1948, and except for a brief period that saw direct election of the prime minister (1996–2003), Israel has always been a parliamentary democracy. Based on Lijphart's (2012) typology of democratic regimes, the Israeli parties-executive dimension is an example of an extreme consensus regime, with a highly proportional electoral system, a fragmented multiparty system, relatively short-lived governments, and oversized coalitions. At the same time, Israel is highly majoritarian in the unitary-federal dimension, with its extremely centralized unitary regime, unicameralism, and lack of a codified, rigid constitution. It can further be argued that the functioning of the Supreme Court fit the unitary model until the "constitutional revolution" of the 1990s (see the chapter by Hofnung & Wattad on the judicial branch in this volume).

In his assessment of the Israeli regime, Lijphart (1993) argues that parliamentarism and the consensus-unitary structure make sense, given Israel's multicleave society (see part 2 in this volume) and its relatively small size. Indeed, Israel has successfully sustained its democracy in highly difficult circumstances (see the chapter by Dowty on democracy in Israel in this volume). Yet at the same time Lijphart makes the case that the consensus and unitary features are too extreme, and he calls for a measure of fine-tuning to curtail them. Other scholars who have closely examined and diagnosed the Israeli system concur: Israel must adhere to parliamentarism and to its consensus features but needs to moderate some of its extreme components, especially its electoral system (Brichta, 2001; Friedberg, Atmor, & Knafelman, 2013; Shugart, 2013).

In the first decades following its establishment, Israel had a dominant party system (see the chapter by Hazan on the parties and the party system in this volume). Medding (2000) contends that this created a de facto majoritarian dynamic that enabled the government to successfully face the difficult challenges of state building, security, and

absorption of Jewish immigrants. In the 1970s the party system evolved into a bipolar multiparty system. In this more competitive context, some of the pathologies of the extreme electoral system became much more apparent. Especially evident was the power of parties that captured the middle position, acted as kingmakers, and claimed more than their fair share of the governing cake. Yet as will be discussed in this chapter, this led Israel to adopt direct elections for the prime minister rather than to amend its legislative electoral system. This reform (1996–2003) brought with it further fragmentation. Since its adoption, and also after its abolition, Israel has exhibited a highly fragmented and unstable party system that has changed from one election to the next. The need for reform may now be more patent than ever before, yet after the failure of the direct election of the prime minister it is almost impossible to make the case for electoral reform, no matter how pressing.

Israel has now had seventy years of both successful and failed attempts to reform its democratic institutions. The major failure was in promoting substantive electoral reform that would change the “extreme” features of the system (Lijphart, 1993; Rahat & Hazan, 2005; Shugart in this volume). First was the rejection of attempts to moderate proportional representation (PR) by adopting multi-member electoral districts, and second was the failure to moderately personalize its closed-list electoral system. At the same time, reformers chalked up a series of successes. These range from small amendments to the electoral system to large reforms of the government system at the local and national levels and within the political parties. The sum of these successes may be described as reform through bypasses (Rahat, 2008b). That is, the reforms injected doses of majoritarianism and personalism into a basically proportional and partisan institutional setting. These intended cures, however, as demonstrated in this chapter, were often worse than the illness.

I present here a brief discussion of the different approaches to the politics of reform and their applicability to the Israeli case. I then examine the failed attempts at electoral reform and the successful small changes to the system (increased electoral threshold, changes of the remainders allocation formula). The chapter then looks at the causes and consequences of the reforms that were adopted: of the local government system (direct election of mayors and separating local from national elections), at the party level (adoption of primaries and the related legislation), and of the national government system (direct election of the prime minister—both adoption and abolition; national referendum on territorial concessions). The chapter concludes with a summary of the failed and successful reform attempts under the theme of “bypasses”: reforming “around” the main institution that needs reform, the Israeli extreme electoral system. The focus here is on reforms of institutions associated with party politics, leaving changes and reforms in other realms, such as the constitutional system and the judiciary, as well as public administration, to other chapters in this handbook (see the chapters by Mahler on the constitutional setting in Israel, by Hofnung & Wattad on the judicial branch in Israel, and by Gilad & Cohen on public administration in Israel).

THE POLITICS OF REFORM

There are several approaches to explaining the politics of reform. First is rational choice. It depicts reform as a story of rational political actors who attempt to change the system so it will work for their own benefit. Second is the institutional approach, which sees reform as an answer to the dysfunction of existing institutions. The third option, the comparative-historical approach, describes the story of reform as a continued struggle between reformers and their opponents. This story, its adherents claim, cannot be reduced to a parsimonious explanation but should be seen as a play with several acts. Finally, the “barrier approach” (Rahat & Hazan, 2011) suggests synthesizing the various approaches to the study of reform by setting a list of barriers that reformers have to pass if they are to succeed in their mission. These range from partisan interests and their coalitional balance, to political culture and tradition, to institutional-level functioning.

The applicability of these differing approaches to the case of Israel has been tested by several scholars (Brichta, 2001; Diskin & Diskin, 1995; Rahat, 2008a). While in some instances the main characters could be seen as rational actors who identify their self-interests, in others they failed to do so, and some even supported types of reform that worked against their own interests. Unintended consequences were evident in the case of the adoption of direct elections for the prime minister, which almost led to the demise of the large parties (Kenig, Rahat, & Hazan, 2005). They were also evident in the attempts of right-wing parties to use the electoral threshold to block Arab parties (discussed later in the chapter).

A common theme in the accounts of both failed and successful reform attempts is the central role of coalition politics in blocking electoral reform, consequently leading to promotion of reforms in other realms (government system, intraparty). One way to overcome these coalitional barriers is to reach an agreement over a reform package; each party can promote its own piece of reform while supporting the initiatives of other parties. Such was the case in 2014 for the package labeled “the governance laws,” which included the Basic Law: Referendum, the increase in the legal electoral threshold from 2 percent to 3.25 percent, putting a cap on the number of ministers and deputy ministers, and the adoption of a complete version of a constructive vote of no confidence (Lento, 2020).

ELECTORAL REFORM: MAJOR FAILURES, MINOR ACHIEVEMENTS

There have been numerous attempts to substantially reform the Israeli electoral system. All have failed. In the early 1950s, one such initiative aimed to increase the electoral

threshold to 10 percent. This was part of the coalition agreement between the largest party, Mapai, and the second largest party, the General Zionists, which together held the required majority. But neither party was fully committed to the idea. Politicians within Mapai feared that such a reform would lead to the demise of their coalition partners and to a crystallization of an alternative to Mapai, the dominant party at the time. The General Zionists feared that Mapai would easily translate its plurality among voters into a majority of seats and reinforce its status as the dominant party.

In 1954 David Ben-Gurion forced Mapai, his party, to adopt and promote his initiative of replacing the Israeli PR system with a single-member district electoral system. The General Zionists proposed a less radical reform, which was supposed to retain PR but substantially curtail it by adopting small multi-member constituencies. All the other parties, however, rejected these reforms, which seemed to threaten their very existence. Not only did they manage to block them, but they also succeeded in entrenching the status of the existing electoral system through an amendment of the Basic Law: The Knesset (1958). The proportionality of the system, including a single national district, is entrenched and thus protected from change unless supported by an absolute majority of at least 61 of the 120 members of the Knesset (Israeli parliament). That is, all the small parties came together, Left, Right, and religious, and supported this amendment as a reaction to the possibility of adopting a majoritarian system that would threaten their survival. No other law in Israel had such entrenched articles until the 1990s.

The failure to promote electoral reform in the 1950s seemingly discouraged any subsequent attempts to do so. In addition, the crystallization of the large electoral alliances in the 1960s and early 1970s (see the chapter by Hazan on the parties and the party system in this volume) could be seen at the time as a reasonable solution to the problem of party system fragmentation. Electoral reform returned to the agenda in 1977, propelled by the fledgling Democratic Movement for Change and its swift success in winning fifteen Knesset seats in the elections that year, making it the third largest party. Electoral reform was a main theme of its platform, uniting its politicians who held otherwise-differing approaches to policy in the foreign affairs, security, and socioeconomic realms. The party joined the Likud-led governing coalition, and reform promotion was one of its key demands. But other issues took center stage (the peace agreement with Egypt, economic issues), and the Democratic Movement for Change fell apart as quickly as it had risen. It split into several factions (some of which defected from the coalition, thereby crushing its influence within it), leaving it powerless to promote reform.

A new window of opportunity for electoral reform promotion opened in 1984, with the formation of the Likud-Alignment unity government. It was logical to expect the two large parties, which together held eighty-five seats (71 percent), to cooperate (as they had in 1973, in the case of the change in the remaining seats allocation formula, discussed later in this chapter) and advance a reform that would strengthen them at the expense of the smaller parties. And this indeed happened, up to a point. Initiatives for electoral reform that would have reduced proportionality, added electoral districts, and personalized election of representatives passed through both a preliminary (1986) and a first reading (1988) for the first time in Israel's history.

The deteriorating relationship between the two large partners made them reluctant, however, to further promote reform. Doing so would have ruined their relationship with their other potential coalition partners as they faced the increasingly probable scenario of the collapse of the unity government. As Diskin and Diskin (1995) put it, they were playing a “prisoner’s dilemma” game and thus ended up with the suboptimal result of not promoting a reform that could serve them both.

When the unity government finally collapsed, in March 1990, another window of opportunity for reform emerged. The problematic period that was commonly referred to as “the stinky trick,” after the first-ever successful vote of no confidence, when no coalition was in place and the public demanded reform, was not exploited to usher in reform of the extreme electoral system. Rather, energy was diverted to advance initiatives for the direct election of the prime minister, which was grafted onto the existing electoral system. Within two months these new reforms, born just two years earlier, reached the same legislative stage as the electoral ones, passing a preliminary and first reading in the Knesset (this took electoral reform proposals no less than six years). Electoral reform was thus sidelined, and direct elections took its place as the major reform. It passed all the hurdles, was implemented for several years, and was then abolished (as discussed later in this chapter).

Direct election of the prime minister may be perceived as the creation of a unique mixed electoral system. It blended closed-list proportional election to the Knesset with the personal majoritarian election of the prime minister (Shugart, 2001), and it influenced voter behavior (Kenig, Rahat, & Hazan, 2005). Yet it was not a reform of the electoral system used for selecting the parliament, but rather a reform of the government system that has implications for the electoral system and electoral behavior.

The successful promotion of direct elections would affect the fate of electoral reform initiatives for years. At first the achievement left all other reforms to languish in drawers or on the shelf, as direct election was seen as a ready solution to the perceived problems of the system, especially governability. After its demise, any renewed attempt to call for electoral reform was much more difficult because of the fear of investing efforts in another failed and destructive reform. Indeed, in the last two decades several versions of electoral reform bills have been raised, though none has been promoted with any gusto. The much-needed reform of the electoral system, which enjoys the support of experts (Brichta, 2001; Friedberg, Atmor, & Knafelman, 2013; Friedberg & Atmor, 2013; Lijphart, 1993; Shugart, 2013), became a nonissue. This is the lingering shadow of the spectacular downfall of direct elections of the prime minister (a reform which, one must remember, was vigorously opposed by many if not all political scientists in Israel who supported electoral reform).

At the same time that electoral reforms failed, initiatives that only tinkered with the existing system were successfully promoted. These were mainly aimed at controlling extreme proportionality. In seventy years, Israel has experienced two changes in its remainders allocation formula and four pertaining to its legal electoral threshold.

The first change in the remainders allocation formula was the only one that actually benefited the smaller parties. In 1951 the D’Hondt method, which favors the large

parties, was replaced with the largest remainder formula, which treats all parties as equal regardless of their size. In 1973 this method was replaced in an agreement between the two large party alliances at the time, the Alignment and Gahal, with the Hagenbach-Bischoff formula (whose results are identical to the D'Hondt method previously in use), which also favors the large parties. These changes clearly reflected changing power distribution in the Knesset: in 1951 there was one large dominant party (Mapai) versus all the others; by 1973 two large party alliances had emerged.

The legal electoral threshold was incrementally increased from 0.83 percent (the share of votes needed to win one seat) in Israel's first elections (1949) to 1 percent on the eve of the second elections (1951). The year before the 1992 elections it was raised to 1.5 percent, and about thirteen years later (2004) to 2 percent. In 2014 the electoral threshold was raised to 3.25 percent of the vote. Israel has thus moved from being a country with an extremely low legal electoral threshold to one with a moderate one. One can even argue that, taking into account the lack of district-level elections, Israel actually has a rather high exclusionary threshold (Eizenberg & Harsagor, 2017).

Interestingly, not only have attempts by right-wing forces to use the threshold to block non-Zionist and anti-Zionist Arab parties failed, they have actually hurt the Right much more. The Labor victory in 1992 and the subsequent adoption of the Oslo Accords with the Palestinians were only possible because a right-wing party (HaTehiya) that won 1.1 percent of the votes did not pass the new 1.5 percent threshold. A politician from this party was one of the initiators of the threshold increase. In the 2015 elections the non-Zionist Hadash, together with the Arab parties, formed an alliance, passed the new threshold, and improved their representation, while an extreme right-wing party failed to pass the 3.25 percent threshold and wasted 3 percent of the votes. These cases demonstrate that small-scale electoral reforms are effective, but not necessarily to the benefit of their architects.

THE REFORMS THAT PASSED: BYPASSES ABOVE AND BELOW THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The Israeli electoral system has been diagnosed as extreme in terms of being hyper-representative and also as extremely partisan (Shugart, 2001, 2013). As discussed previously, this has not changed much; the features that make it extreme have stayed intact: the single national district for seat allocation and the use of a rigid closed-list system. At the same time, Israel has experienced many reforms of its institutions in other realms. These reforms can be seen as attempts to address the problems of the extreme electoral system through bypasses. Direct elections for executive posts at the local and national levels may be seen, together with the adoption of party primaries, as attempts to inject personalized elements into the system. Direct elections and referendums can be seen as attempts to infuse majoritarianism into a highly proportional system.

I now look closely at the main properties of each reform, the key causes and consequences. The concluding section is dedicated to the question of whether the reforms that passed indeed helped balance the extreme electoral system or only exacerbated the (dys)function of the system.

Direct Elections of Heads of Executives

The first substantial reform in the governance system that was adopted in Israel was at the local level. From the 1950s up to 1973, the local electoral and government system resembled that at the national level. A closed-list proportional electoral system, in which the whole municipality served as a single constituency, was used to elect council members. Mayors were then selected by a majority in the council on the basis of coalition politics. In 1975 the system was reformed, and since then mayors have been elected directly. In addition, in the past local elections and national elections were conducted on the same day, about every four years, but since 1978 local elections have been conducted every five years, with no incident of overlap of the two election events.

This reform was adopted in the name of improving governance at the local level, especially to overcome the problems of coalition politics. The large parties that championed it also believed that it would enable them to elect mayors from within their ranks without the need for large payoffs to their coalition partners. Looking back from a perspective of about forty years since its introduction, one can argue that this reform improved governability in some instances, especially in the case of large and prosperous cities. At the same time, smaller and poorer municipalities do not appear to function better. It seems that in terms of local government, one size (i.e., one system) does not fit all. But the centralized type of thinking that is typical of Israeli politics prevents serious consideration of creating several types of local government systems. When it comes to the large parties, we have once again an example of the materialization of unexpected consequences. Over the years the large parties lost most of their representation on the local councils; the number of representatives elected to local councils under their banner is now lower than that of both local parties and the smaller national parties. In addition, the large parties gradually lost their hold on mayorships as politicians increasingly preferred to develop their own local candidacy rather than running under the party label. The reform created a separate, nonpartisan realm of local politics, linked to national politics only in an opportunistic, personalized manner. It is now not uncommon to witness mayors moving from one national party to the other, usually on the heels of a party's electoral success or failure and based on its status as a ruling party.

The reform at the local level served as a precedent for a parallel reform at the national level. Direct election of the prime minister, an idea that was never seriously considered before 1988 (Rahat, 2008a), was initiated and adopted within four years, during the term of the twelfth Knesset (1988–1992). The reform was intended to solve the problem of governance by bypassing the challenges of coalition government in a fragmented party system. Granting the directly elected prime minister a popular mandate was seen as a

solution to this problem. Moreover, its initiators claimed that this reform would encourage straight-ticket voting, because people would want to strengthen their prime ministerial candidate by also voting for his or her party, and thus would increase the power of the large parties. The Knesset continued to be elected using the same highly representative electoral system. It could still oust the government, but unlike before, the price was now new elections for both the Knesset and the prime minister (Hazan, 1996). In short, it was supposed to allow Israel to have its cake and eat it, too.

The reform did not achieve its goals. The first two directly elected prime ministers (Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996 and Ehud Barak in 1999) fell prematurely. The opportunity that the citizens had to split their vote between a prime ministerial candidate from a large party and a smaller party for the Knesset was increasingly tapped. This created further fragmentation of the party system and made governing even harder. The reform was abolished by 2001, largely with the support of the large parties that had suffered its consequences, and despite the opposition of most of the smaller, sectarian parties. The abolition arrested the process of the decline of the large parties and the strengthening of the small sectarian ones (Kenig, Rahat, & Hazan, 2005). But the party system never returned to its former constellation. It remained fragmented, with the governing parties now not even holding a majority of seats in their coalition (except for the case of Likud in 2003–2005). Within this reality, it is no wonder that the dangerous idea of adopting a presidential regime or another version of direct elections is still raised from time to time. While the bad memory of the consequences of the direct election reform helps to fight such initiatives, it also blocks the way for sorely needed electoral reform.

Israel also has enjoyed some rather positive consequences, in terms of governance, of the adoption and abolition of this reform (Lento, 2020). The direct election of the prime minister brought with it the request for an absolute majority (rather than a plurality) in case of a no-confidence vote. With the abolition of direct election, Israel adopted a semi-constructive vote of no confidence (which became a full constructive vote of no confidence in 2015; see the chapter by Friedberg & Hazan on the legislative branch in this volume). The prime minister also has the power to call for early elections, unless an alternative government is constructed within a limited time. In short, Israel has now seemingly stabilized its governance system within the general framework of a fragmented multiparty parliamentary system.

Reforms at the Party Level

Israel also saw substantial reforms at the party level. The methods for selecting party leaders and candidates to the Knesset lists have been reformed over the years (Kenig, 2009; Cross et al., 2016). In the 1960s–1970s, party leadership ceased to be about “natural” leaders (e.g., David Ben-Gurion and Menachem Begin) and started to be contested. The contest in the large parties was, first, for the votes of delegates within the party institutions (central committees, party conference) and then, from the 1990s, for party members’ votes (primaries). Candidate selection was similarly democratized (Rahat,

2008b; Hazan, 1997): in the 1950s and 1960s it was largely decided by small nomination committees; in the 1970s and 1980s parties passed this task to delegates in party institutions; and since the 1990s some have let their members choose their candidate lists (e.g., Labor since 1992, Likud in 1996 and since 2009).

Party primaries, especially regarding the candidate lists, suffer from various problems (Cross et al., 2016). These include the quality of participation, ensuring balanced representation and competition, and sustaining party cohesion. Yet the “cure” to these problems—the emergence of personalized parties (Yair Lapid’s *Yesh Atid*, Moshe Kahlon’s *Kulanu*, Tzipi Livni’s *Hatnua*, Avigdor Liberman’s *Yisrael Beytenu*), in which the leader selects himself or herself and the entire candidate list—seems to be worse than the disease. The cure might be, as is the case in other democracies, to involve several selectorates in screening candidates before letting party members make the final decision. But Israeli parties do not seem open to such an option yet.

An additional, related problem is the development of discriminatory treatment of the internally democratic parties in comparison to the undemocratic ones. Since the adoption of the Party Law in 1992, many amendments have been added to help parties cope with the problems of financing and administering internal party elections, mainly relating to party primaries. These have deepened the involvement of the state in the internal affairs of the more democratic parties and have exposed wrongdoing by their candidates to the public. At the same time, those parties in which the leader is self-selected and in which candidates are picked by a single leader, or by a party elite, have not had to expose themselves to such close scrutiny. The end result is that the state, instead of helping democratic parties and encouraging intraparty democracy, is *de facto* punishing them.

This is another unintended consequence of small reforms with very good intentions. The promoters of such amendments were representatives from the democratic parties, who sought ways to make their internal elections cleaner and fairer. While they may have achieved this goal when they allowed the state to interfere, they also paid the price for being democratic and transparent. At the same time, their undemocratic competitors stayed untouched. Only a reform that will lend extra financial state support to democratic parties can cure this absurd situation, whereby a democratic state *de facto* punishes democratic parties.

The Referendum

Referendums were not a component of the Israeli constitutional system until recently. Yet they featured in Israeli politics in various senses. These included Ben-Gurion’s attempt in 1958 to initiate a referendum on electoral reform in order to bypass the Knesset’s rejection. Later examples include coalition and electoral promises to conduct referendums in case of peace agreements that would require withdrawal from occupied territory, in order to bypass intraparty and intra-coalition disagreements. In 1999 the requirement to conduct a referendum in case of a withdrawal from land in which Israeli

administration and law are applied (i.e., Israel within the “Green Line” [pre-1967 borders] plus East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights) was legislated. But an article in the law determined that holding a referendum would be dependent on the adoption of Basic Law: Referendum. This Basic Law was adopted only in 2014. Its adoption marked a success for the Israeli Right, as it added an extra barrier to the possibility of further territorial concessions. Scholars are concerned about the potential of this tool to hurt Israeli democracy, especially because it is about injecting a majoritarian mechanism into a highly divided polity that needs consensus mechanisms rather than adversarial ones.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: MANY REFORMS, BUT NOT THE RIGHT ONES

As we have seen, attempts to substantially reform the Israeli electoral system have repeatedly failed. Reform initiatives that could have moderated the extreme features of the system were rejected. Only incremental changes of the legal electoral threshold and of the remainders allocation formula were adopted. Yet while only small-scale changes with limited effect were adopted in the electoral systems, Israel experienced substantial reforms in other realms. These include the reform of the government system at the local and national levels, intraparty reforms, and the adoption of the mechanism of referendums to decide on international agreements involving territorial concessions. These may be perceived as reforms via bypass, from above (direct election of the prime minister) and below (primaries). These reforms injected elements of majoritarianism and personalization into the local and the national governments, the political parties, and even decision-making (referendum). Yet they were not even the second-best solutions to Israel's problematic features: its extremely unitary structure and especially the extreme electoral system. Sometimes the remedies were actually worse than the illness.

Were the major reforms, which can be perceived as bypasses meant to fix the pathologies of the extreme system, effective? The answer is unequivocally no. The only positive reform has been the adoption of a constructive vote of no confidence. Yet the increased stability that it brings does not necessarily mean improved governability. Another positive development was the abolition of direct election of the prime minister, which threatened the very survival of the functioning democracy found in Israel. But this would not have been needed if the reform had not been adopted in the first place.

Most of the reforms, instead of moderating PR and partisanship, accelerated processes of party decline (Kenig & Tuttnauer, 2017) and political personalization (Balmas et al., 2014). Israel has experienced a comparatively sharp decline of its political parties and a high increase in personalization (Rahat and Kenig, 2018). The Israeli electoral system no longer fits its highly personalized politics. The hyper-partisan electoral system cannot contain personalized politics, and thus it is expressed outside it, either separating politicians from their parties or making personalized parties a viable solution for

sustaining party cohesion. At the same time, instead of moderating proportionality, harsh majoritarian mechanisms of direct elections and the referendum were adopted, injecting adversity into a system whose successful logic is still about building a consensus. If Israel truly wants to fix its political system, it must finally reform its electoral system. Most other cures have proven to be worse than the disease.

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CHAPTER 23

THE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE PALESTINIAN MINORITY IN ISRAEL

AS'AD GHANEM

INTRODUCTION

POLITICAL developments among the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel reflect changes and interactions among three main domains. First are internal socioeconomic developments within Palestinian Arab society, including internal democratization processes that alter the status of the clan, the family, and women; Jewish–Arab relations; the level of technological development; processes of modernization; and so forth (Rouhana & Ghanem, 1993). Second are developments relating to the Palestinian National Movement and the Palestinian question. This includes any development relevant to the Arab–Israeli dispute and the Palestinian “problem” with consequential influence on the political development of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel, including attempts by some of the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and diaspora to influence this development (Rekhess, 1989). Third are developments in the Israeli national domain and the interaction with the Jewish majority in Israel. Specifically, this domain involves Israeli policy toward its Palestinian Arab citizens and the implications of its Jewish-Zionist character and the Arab citizens’ attitudes vis-à-vis the state (Ghanem, 1998, 2011)

Following the war in 1948 and the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe), in which almost 530 Palestinian villages and towns were destroyed and around 800,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homeland to live as refugees in the surrounding countries, approximately 160,000 Palestinian Arabs remained inside Israel’s borders and became citizens of the new state. They comprised 10 percent of the entire Palestinian Arab population at the time. The subsequent worsening status of the Palestinians was a direct result of the

war (Pappe, 2011). The main difference between the Palestinians in Israel and Palestinians elsewhere is that they stayed in their lands and later became Israeli citizens. As an indigenous people who became a minority in their own homeland following the establishment of the Israeli state, the Palestinian Arab minority was unable to organize and rebuild itself politically in the political reality that germinated in the aftermath of the Palestinian Nakba. The Palestinian minority was a society in ruins; it had few financial and cultural resources and lacked political and social elites (Lustick, 1980).

Two decades after the Nakba, the Six-Day War of 1967 again influenced political, economic, and social developments among Palestinians in Israel, leading to increased national awareness among Palestinians in Israel and the establishment of Palestinian national institutions. The first emergence of an educated Palestinian Arab cadre and the widening of the Palestinian Arab middle class in the early 1970s led to the establishment of various institutions of either a national or a regional brand that began to organize Palestinian Arab society in Israel.

The interaction between developments in the three different domains created the basic infrastructure for political development among Palestinians in Israel. Two basic interrelated aspects of these political developments are described here. The first is the historical context of the political developments; here I present four distinct phases of the Palestinians' political history in Israel. Understanding the processes that took place during these periods will help the reader comprehend the basic framework of the transformations and changes in the political situation of the Palestinians in Israel, including the development of their political institutions, which is representing the other aspect of these developments. The chapter then describes and explains the major Palestinian political institutions in Israel.

FOUR MAJOR PHASES OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Beginning with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the Palestinian minority went through four major phases of political development, as elaborated here.

Phase One, 1948–1967

The first phase that followed the Nakba and the dispersal of the Palestinian population during the war in 1948 was the concomitant depletion of the intellectual and established leadership that could have rebuilt a foundation for the formation of Palestinian institutions. In the aftermath of the Palestinian Nakba, Palestinian towns, cities, and villages were left in ruins, as was the political and religious Palestinian Arab leadership. The power vacuum created by the disappearance of their leaders left the Palestinian Arabs in

Israel weak and lacking guidance. Those who remained in the new state of Israel were mostly rural farmers and peasants, a community sundered from its intellectual and political leadership and lacking the traditional urban elite. In addition, geographical isolation separated Arab towns and villages because of restrictions on movement by Israel's military rule, weakening commercial and social ties among Arab communities and their ability to organize their political institutions.

Before 1948, Zionism and the various Jewish movements had not invested great efforts in defining the policies of the state-to-be toward an Arab minority (Lustick, 1980, p. 43). Following the establishment of the state, Israeli authorities had to adopt temporary and ad hoc policies to deal with the "problem" of the Arab minority. In general terms, three main considerations guided the Israeli authorities' policies toward the Palestinian minority. The first was the "security" consideration, which viewed the Arabs as a security threat, immediate or potential, to the State of Israel because they were part of the Palestinian people and the Arab nation surrounding Israel and therefore liable to join the military effort against Israel in the event of an Arab attack (Benziman & Mansour, 1992, pp. 11–32). The second was the "Jewish-Zionist" consideration, which viewed the state as first and foremost a "Jewish-Zionist" state and even "the state of the Jewish people," whose *raison d'être* and mission were to serve the Jewish people. Discrimination against Arabs, land expropriation, and other measures were considered "legitimate" if intended to serve these goals (Jeryis, 1966; Lustick, 1980; Smootha, 1980). The third was the "democratic-liberal" consideration, which viewed Israel as a democratic state that must take care of the welfare of its citizens, including the Arabs, with formal equality and without discrimination (Rekhess, 1988; Smootha, 1980).

In the period after 1948 the security and Jewish-Zionist considerations received greatest weight, whereas the democratic-liberal factor played only a very minor role in the determination of government policies. Consequently, between 1948 and 1966 a military government was imposed on areas of Arab population concentration in the Galilee, the Triangle region in the center of Israel and the Negev Desert.

Under the military government, severe restrictions were placed on the Arabs' freedom of movement and expression. Travel from one place to another required a permit from the military governor (Lustick, 1980). Most of the Mandate-era Arab newspapers were closed; only *Al-Ittihad* and the governmental *Al-Yawm* continued to appear. Circulation of the Communist Party daily *Al-Ittihad*, considered to be an opposition paper, was allowed in some regions and banned in others (Lustick, 1980). These and other techniques employed by the authorities hindered attempts at political organization; they deterred many Israeli Palestinian Arab citizens from political activity, prevented the consolidation of a national leadership, and encouraged "conciliatory" elements among the Arabs. In this way the authorities' active intervention prevented any "natural" political development among the Palestinian minority during the years 1948–1967.

There were three attempts to establish Arab national organizations during this period, in addition to the continued activities of Communist Party members in the Arab communities (see below). In 1955 Elias Khoussa attempted to set up an Arab party; in 1958 the Arab Popular Front was established under the leadership of Yani, the head of the

Kafr Yassif municipal council; and in 1961 Nasserists founded the Al-Ard movement. All three attempts aroused the suspicion of the authorities, who moved successfully to hinder these organizations from gaining strength and thereby prevented the emergence of an Arab national leadership in the country.

Phase Two, 1967–Oslo

The second phase was the political consolidation and politicization that began to appear following the 1967 war and reached its zenith with the creation of “al-Jabha” (Hadash) in 1977 and its political domination of Palestinian Arab politics until the Oslo Accord. The 1970s were a turning point in the history of Palestinians in Israel. That decade marked the creation of national and regional institutions, such as the Arab Student Committee and the National Union of Arab University and High School Students, the Union of Arab Writers, and the National Committee for the Heads of Local Arab Municipalities. Those processes of institution building peaked at the beginning of the 1980s and were marked by the creation of The High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens in Israel. By then new, young, university-educated leaders with national Palestinian Arab identification were joining political parties and presented a new agenda through the various political organizations and institutions in existence among Palestinian Arabs in Israel.

During this phase a major change took place in the nature, level, and scope of Palestinian Arab political activity in Israel, including political institution building and participation and a willingness to put forward ideologies and positions that challenged state policies and the Jewish majority. This was sparked by increased awareness of the issue of equality, the desire to resolve the Palestinian “problem,” and willingness to make some active contribution on these fronts and to create a sharp increase in self-confidence.

Changes in the nature and form of the control applied to the Arabs of Israel and changes in the Israeli political constellation reinforced the Arabs’ self-confidence. This was manifested by a readiness to develop patterns of thought and action unacceptable to the Israeli authorities and the Jewish majority. This increased self-confidence and its manifestations were based on reflections concerning deep and major changes that took place among the Palestinian minority.

First and perhaps most important were the demographic changes in the Palestinian community in Israel and in the community’s physical structure. The growth in the size of the Palestinian Arab population and the changes in the physical structure of the village, including the development of Arab towns since the early 1970s, reinforced their self-confidence and provided an infrastructure for the flowering of cultural life, the development of separate Arab political organizations, and a greater weight in joint Arab–Jewish organizations, as well as attempts to develop an autonomous economy in the Arab communities.

Second were changes in the balance of power in the Israeli political system between Left and Right (see the chapter by Hazan on the parties and party system in this

volume). Starting in the mid-1970s, a balance began to emerge between the two main blocs in Israeli politics: the Right, led by the Likud Party, and the Left, headed by the Labor Party. This situation increased Arab self-confidence in two ways. These two blocs needed Arab votes in general and the support of the Arab representatives in particular in various elected bodies, including the Knesset (Israel's parliament) and its committees, the Histadrut (labor federation) executive committee, and the local councils of the mixed Arab-Jewish cities. The competition for Arab votes, whether direct or by vying for the support of their representatives, spawned awareness among Arabs of their rising importance and increased their self-confidence.

The third major change involved the growing strength of the Palestinian national movement as represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Throughout the 1950s, and to some extent during the 1960s and 1970s, enhanced self-confidence among all segments of the Palestinian people, including those who had remained in Israel and became Israeli citizens, evinced a gradual increase in support for the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people (Ghanem, 2001). Palestinian Arabs in Israel began to openly declare that they were part of the Palestinian people and launched a campaign in support of the establishment of the Palestinian state alongside Israel in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, occupied by Israel in 1967. In addition, this development strengthened the internal solidarity of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel and their willingness to confront the authorities in pursuit of their individual and collective rights.

The fourth change was modernization and improved education among the Palestinians in Israel, manifested in gradual and hesitant changes in sociocultural values: an increase in the importance of the nuclear family, slow changes in the status of women, a steady drop in the fertility rate, improvements in housing conditions and medical services, and so forth. These developments contradicted the ongoing discrimination by the state in major fields of life and contributed to the consolidation of a strong demand for equality and equal civil status. This was one of the factors that encouraged the Arabs in Israel to use various methods of participation to alter the situation of discrimination, including the level and scope of political organization.

Phase Three, the Post-Oslo Accord Period

The third phase followed the Oslo Accord (1993) between Israel and the PLO. Beginning in the mid-1990s a new type of leadership appeared in the Knesset, distinguished by some leaders being graduates of the Arab Student Movement in the 1970s. These new leaders were members of the second generation after the Palestinian Nakba. Most of their political experience was gained through their activities at universities, working with student movements in which they came into direct contact with radical Israeli student movements. Interestingly, this group of leaders produced a new political discourse that went beyond the discourse of equality that had dominated Arab politics until the mid-1990s. The new discourse stood in opposition to Zionist ideology and its insistence on the Jewish character of the state. The new group of leaders participated in the Knesset

elections of 1996 at a time of deep crisis in Palestinian society following the Oslo Accord. That crisis manifested itself socially, politically, and in identity politics (Rouhana & Ghanem, 1998).

During this phase, increased concern was devoted to people's daily needs. However, despite serious efforts invested by the Palestinian Arab political, regional, parliamentary, and extraparliamentary leadership, they found that their ability to improve the living conditions of their communities was very limited. In other words, Palestinian Arab leaders were unable to improve their constituents' daily lives or to influence the media's treatment of their political issues. In a study of commercial Arab media coverage of political Arab leaders in Israel, it was found that most coverage was devoted to local leaders, while national and regional leaders enjoyed marginal airtime (Jamal, 2011).

Phase Four, 2006–Today

The fourth and last phase started with the publication of the "Future Vision for the Palestinian-Arab Community in Israel" in 2006 and included the creation of the Joint List political party in 2015. Both developments signaled the emergence of the "politics of faith," that is, the consolidation of the Palestinian Arab minority's self-confidence.

At the end of 2006 the National Committee of the Heads of Arab Local Authorities, which constitutes more than 80 percent of the membership of the Higher Follow-Up Committee, took a serious step by publishing the "Future Vision." This historic document presented the committee's collective vision for the future of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel (Ghanem & Mustafa, 2009), setting it as a guide for the accomplishment of the committee's agenda and opening its contents for public discussion.

The document's publication was a historic event in the annals of the Palestinians in Israel and in their relationship with the Jewish majority and the State of Israel on the one hand, and in their interaction with the Palestinian national movement on the other hand. It was the first time a representative national body of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel had drafted and published a comprehensive paper describing both the existing situation and the changes needed in a broad spectrum of domains: relations with the Jewish majority, the legal status of the Palestinian Arab minority, land allocations, social and economic issues, the Arab education system, the status of Arab civil and political institutions, and so forth.

The publication of the document ignited heated public debate concerning its ramifications, including whether it represented radicalization of or reconciliation by Palestinians in Israel. The academic literature has focused on analyzing the sociopolitical background against which the documents were authored, reflecting on the responses to the documents in Jewish and Arab societies, understanding their contribution to the creation of a consensual collective political agenda for the Palestinians in Israel, and assessing their influence on the relationship between the Jewish majority and the Palestinian minority (Ghanem & Mustafa, 2009).

The next crucial event for Palestinian Arab society in Israel took place in January 2015, when, after tedious negotiations, the four main Arab parties agreed to form a party entitled the Joint List and run together in the 2015 elections. The four partners in this alliance—the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, the Southern Branch of the Islamist Movement, the National Democratic Alliance, and the Arab Movement for Change—had previously been characterized, particularly at the local level, by long-standing animosity among their leaders and deep ideological differences. In this respect, Arab political behavior and performance in the 2015 elections represents a significant transformation from the era of political crisis to a “politics of faith” (Navot, Rubin, & Ghanem, 2017). A similar process of cohesion took place in the Follow-Up Committee for Arabs in Israel, where Mohamad Barakeh was elected as the new leader, with a clear agenda to strengthen and enhance the ability of the Follow-Up Committee to function as a united and consolidated leadership for the Arab community in Israel.

The four phases of political development show that extensive demographic and socio-economic transformations have taken place in Arab society in Israel since 1948 in all aspects of life, but particularly over the course of the past three to four decades. These transformations have facilitated Palestinians’ renewed organization and strengthened their self-confidence, helping to form a foundation for the revival of Palestinian Arab cultural and social life in Israel and for political activities in various venues, such as a basic trust in their ability to achieve positive changes among their community, organized and coordinated efforts to maximize the use of their human resources, and basic efforts to prioritize their goals and interests. This type of political action reflects a deep change in the community and its leadership. This chapter now shifts to an elaboration of the main political institutions that were created by the Palestinian community activists and leaders to serve the needs of their community.

PALESTINIANS IN ISRAEL’S POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

The Palestinian Arab political organizations and institutions in Israel can be divided into two main categories: political groups and movements that represent different ideological and political variables, and national organizations that represent the whole community. These two forms of political institutions/organizations are described in greater detail here.

Palestinian Arab Political Movements/Groups

Until 1984, most of the Palestinian Arab parliamentary political party leadership came from the Communist Party—later called the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality—

and from Arab lists affiliated with Zionist parties. In 1984 the lawyer Muhammad Me'ari was elected to the Knesset for the first time, as a candidate for the Progressive Party for Peace. In addition, Abd Al-Wahab Darawshe, who founded the Arab Democratic Party on the eve of the 1988 elections, was also elected to the Knesset. Parliamentary representation by multiple parties has constituted one of the main features of Arab politics from the 1980s until the present day. The political parties representing the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel are described here.

The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality

Starting in the early 1970s, Communist initiatives reflected a profound change in the party's perception of its position and role vis-à-vis the Palestinian Arab community in Israel and other forces active in the field. The party launched activities based on the concept that the Communists were the central force among the Arabs that should lead their struggle. The search for ways to attract supporters led to the establishment of extraparlimentary committees such as the Land Defence Committee, the National Committee of Local Authorities, and in 1977 the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE, also known by its Hebrew acronym "Hadash") (Rekhess, 1993). This latter organization was in fact the pinnacle of the Communists' efforts to broaden their influence.

The DFPE was the result of an Arab-Jewish alliance established to serve as an umbrella organization that included, in addition to the Communists, the Black Panthers and representatives of various committees of Arab university graduates, of some Arab local authorities, of students, and of other public committees and organizations. Even though the DFPE was essentially controlled by the Communists, they did not insist on the inclusion of the "realization of communism" in the guidelines of the DFPE and settled for a number of points that constituted a minimum platform uniting all the partners in the DFPE—namely, achieving a comprehensive and stable Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab peace, defending workers' rights, achieving equality for Arabs in Israel, advancing the status of women, abolishing communal discrimination, and protecting the interests of the poor neighborhoods and development towns (Ghanem, 2001). The DFPE is still considered one of the main political party organizations in the Palestinian Arab community in Israel.

The Sons of the Village (Ibnaa al-Balad)

The outcome of the 1967 war caused a momentary paralysis in the activity of Palestinian national movements. The Israeli victory over the Arab armies came as a great surprise to the Palestinian community, but the results of the war led to renewed contact between the Palestinian Arabs in Israel and the main concentration of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, who fell under Israeli control. The renewed contact stirred a Palestinian national awakening among the Arabs in Israel. This, along with exposure to various streams in the Palestinian national movement, provided fertile ground for the establishment of a Marxist Palestinian national group in the early 1970s, known as the Sons of the Village (Ibnaa al-Balad). The Sons of the Village movement was established in 1972 by nationalists from Umm al-Fahm in the Triangle region of Israel, under the leadership of a young attorney, Muhammad Kewan.

The Sons of the Village boycotted Knesset elections and called on Palestinian Arabs to abstain from voting. In the 1973 local authority elections, the movement established several branches in different communities under other names, such as the “al-Nahda” movement in Tayyibe and the “al-Fajr” movement in Ar’ara. In the 1978 local authority elections, the movement doubled its representation in Umm al-Fahm to two councilors and also won single seats in Tayyibe, Kabul, Mi’ilya, and Baqa al-Gharbiyya. In the 1983 local elections it won nine seats on various local councils (Landau, 1993).

The Sons of the Village took the initiative to augment their activity among Arab university students in Israel. The campuses, protected by their own rules, and the young students willing to take risks provided fertile ground for their activity. The campus branches of the Sons of the Village called themselves the National Progressive Movement. They focused on disseminating the movement’s doctrines and increasing students’ commitment to nationalist activity, in the hope that they would continue to be active after they returned to their homes. At the same time the groups worked to solve student problems such as housing and studies, and organized cultural and social activities.

The Islamic Movement(s)

After 1967 the renewed contact between the Palestinian Arabs in Israel and those living in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the existence of Islamic organizations and religious seminars in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, created new conditions for the development of political Islam among Palestinian Arabs in Israel (Meir, 1989). A number of young people who had completed high school and were attracted to religious sites and Islam preferred to continue their studies in the Islamic colleges and institutes that prepared them for the title of “sheikh.” These young men began unorganized activity to preach religion in their home communities and elsewhere in Israel where there were concentrations of Muslims. They delivered sermons in the mosques and organized meetings on Muslim festivals (Meir, 1989). Their activity paved the way for the organization of a political and social Islamic movement.

The history of Islamic religious organization in Israel can be divided into two periods. The first (1979–1981) featured a semimilitary underground organization composed of a small core of people who believed in the need for armed struggle against the Jews and the State of Israel; they called themselves “Usrat al-Jihad” (the Jihad Family). This group was rounded up by the Israeli security forces in 1981, and the imprisonment of its leaders put an end to it. The second period, from 1983 through to the present, began with the emergence of Sheikh Abdallah Nimr Darwish of Kafr Qasim in the Triangle region as leader of a new organization, which called itself the Young Muslims. The group began to organize in almost every community where there were Muslims and established voluntary associations to promote social activity and gather contributions for these activities. Its members also began to organize on a countrywide basis. In general, the mosques served as the meeting place for its members and provided a place where they could preach and persuade others of the need to return to religious sources and attract new members.

Until 1996, the Islamic Movement did not participate officially in Knesset elections, even though it did not formally boycott the elections either. Close to the elections to the 14th Knesset (1996), the Islamic Movement set up a joint list with the Democratic Arab Party, and its representatives won two out of the four seats for the joint list.

Some members of the movement seceded in protest against the movement's participation in the elections and established an alternative movement that is known as the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement, led by Ra'ad Salah, mayor of Umm al-Fahm (Ghanem & Mustafa, 2014). Until recently the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement was firmly rooted and even institutionalized, and it constantly faces the challenge of the hostility of state authorities to its activities. On November 17, 2015, the Israeli defense minister at the time, Moshe Yaalon, issued an order defining the Islamic Movement as an illegal entity. Accordingly, any person working with the movement would be considered to be committing a crime punishable by law and liable to a prison sentence. This decision was made under emergency rules introduced during the British Mandate. It was not approved by the courts; it is an administrative order by the Israeli authorities made in accordance with public declarations that the Islamic Movement is an organization that poses a risk to public security in Israel, and that its work in Jerusalem, especially with regard to the Al-Aqsa mosque, aggravates the situation there (Ghanem & Khatib, 2017).

The Progressive Movement

In 1984 the Progressive Movement began organizing throughout the country in order to contest the Knesset elections. The initiative was joined by public figures, university graduates, local authority mayors, students, and other groups in Arab communities. The founding conference in Nazareth proclaimed the establishment of the Progressive Movement, which as the elections approached reached an agreement with the Jewish Alternative Group led by Dr. Matti Peled and the journalist Uri Avneri to set up the Progressive List for Peace (PLP), whose mixed candidate list was headed by attorney Muhammad Mi'ari and Matti Peled.

In its platform the PLP emphasized support for equality for Palestinian Arabs in Israel, with an emphasis on their Palestinian national identity. In the Knesset election held in 1992 the movement failed to attain the minimum votes and consequently ceased to exist.

The Democratic Arab Party

In January 1988, shortly after the start of the first intifada, Labor member of Knesset Abdulwahab Darawshe, from the Galilee village of Iksal, addressed a rally in Nazareth, calling upon the audience to protest the government's handling of the unrest in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He announced that he was resigning from the Labor Party and its Knesset group. Darawshe immediately began to look into options for the continuation of his political career. In consultation with a number of local authority mayors, academics, and others, he decided to establish a new party that would be overtly Arab (Landau, 1993).

In the 1988 elections the Democratic Arab Party (DAP) won only one seat in the Knesset—a good beginning nevertheless. Four years later the DAP increased its share of the Arab vote from 11.3 percent to 15.2 percent and doubled its representation to two seats (Ghanem, 2001). In 1996 the DAP formed an alliance and joint list with the Southern Branch of the Islamic Movement, together winning four seats. In 2015 this party lost its representation in the Knesset, though it is still active in the Palestinian Arab community in Israel.

The National Democratic Alliance

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was established in 1995–1996, largely in reaction to the Oslo agreements between the PLO and Israel and the exclusion of the issue of the future status of the Palestinians in Israel from the talks and political arrangements. The alliance is composed of a number of small left-wing political groups that had previously operated in Arab towns and villages, including the Sons of the Village, the Equality Alliance founded by Dr. Azmi Bishara of Nazareth (a lecturer at Bir Zeit University and a researcher at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute), the remnants of the Progressive Movement, and various other local groups. The NDA received approval to register as a political party. It demands that Israel redefine itself as the state of all its citizens rather than as the state of the Jewish people. It also demands that the government should grant special status to the Palestinian Arab minority, expressed in institutional autonomy and the possibility of managing its own affairs.

In preparation for the 1996 Knesset elections, the NDA presented a joint list with the DFPE; its representative, Dr. Azmi Bishara, received the fourth place on the joint list. During the term of the Knesset profound differences emerged between Bishara and the other members of the group, which spilled over into the two parties and thence into the media. Attempts at reconciliation before the elections failed; the NDA ran alone for the 15th Knesset, reinforced by Dr. Ahmad Tibi's movement—the Arab Movement for Change—and won about 17 percent of the valid Arab votes, a fine achievement that gave it two Knesset members. The NDA, however, did not realize its full potential because of its organizational weaknesses and lack of a united leadership. In 2007 the party leader, Azmi Bishara, left the country for Qatar after police investigation of his activities.

The Arab Movement for Change

The Arab Movement for Change (AMC) is a political party, active within the Palestinian community in Israel, that was founded by Dr. Ahmed Tibi with several other Palestinian Arab intellectuals and activists in 1996. Tibi had served as a party delegate to the Knesset since 1999. The AMC has supported the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, advocating the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital alongside Israel. It actively supports change in the legal and civil status of Palestinian Arab citizens in Israel, demanding that they be recognized as a national minority by defining the state as “the state of all its nationalities” rather than as a Jewish state. The AMC aims to reduce the sociodemographic gap between the Jewish and Arab communities through a policy of corrective discrimination for Arab society in various fields,

such as housing, distribution of land, and budgets, to achieve equality between the Arab and Jewish communities in Israel. Recent public opinion polls show a steady rise in support for the AMC and its leadership.

The Joint List

The most significant development for the Palestinian Arab minority in Israeli politics since the Oslo Accord is the creation of the Joint List in January 2015 as a joint initiative of all the Arab political parties represented in the Israeli parliament. After the announcement in December 2014 that a date had been set for early elections in Israel (for the twentieth Knesset, only two years after the previous 2013 elections), parliamentary political parties representing the Palestinian Arabs in Israel strove to establish a Joint List for the election, which was held in March 2015. Four parties taking part in the Knesset elections formed the Joint List; the DFPE, the Southern Branch of the Islamic Movement, the NDA (Tajamo'), and the AMC, led by Member of Knesset Ahmed Tibi.

The Joint List won thirteen seats in the 2015 election, two more than the total individual gains of the Arab parties in previous elections. Ahead of the April 2019 Knesset elections, the Joint List split into two competing lists, and together they received ten seats, a significant decrease compared to 2015 that expressed anger in the Arab public on the split. In light of the re-elections, they reunited and ran together in the September 2019 elections and again reached thirteen seats, and they won fifteen seats in March 2020, a significant achievement in the number of seats for Arab parties.

The creation of the Joint List was a response to an internal demand and to challenges that are raised by the Palestinian community in Israel, as well as to the external challenges posed by the state and its governmental policies toward the Palestinian community in Israel. These challenges still await their fulfillment, with a major contribution from the Joint List. They include the challenge of reorganizing and improving the organs of the Palestinian Arab community, building its national institutions, and providing effective leadership for community work and the popular struggle in addition to its parliamentary work. On the other hand, the Joint List must prove its ability to challenge Israeli state policies toward its Palestinian citizens and to serve as an effective tool for the transformation of these policies in a positive direction.

Following the last two elections, September 2019 and March 2020, the Joint List recommended to the president Benny Gantz of the Blue and White party as its candidate for prime minister. In both cases, the list failed to demonstrate a change in Blue and White's attitude, which represented the "Israeli center," toward the political legitimacy of the Arabs in Israel. Eventually Gantz chose to go with Netanyahu, rejecting the option of relying on the support of the Joint List, making it very difficult for the Joint List to function as an effective tool that can bring about a change in the government's attitude toward its constituents, and in fact, its intention to impact the Israeli government's policies has failed so far.

National Political Organizations: The National Committee for the Heads of Local Councils and the High Follow-Up Committee

During the 1970s various national institutions were established, the most significant of which was the National Committee for the Heads of Local Arab Authorities, founded in 1972. In addition, the Committee for Land Defence was founded in 1975, the same year that the Arab University Student Association was founded. These organizations were preceded by many Arab high school and university student associations (Mostafa, 2002). Arab student committees were, and still are, an exemplar of organizations in which candidates are elected under conditions of fair competition. The National Committee for the Heads of Local Arab Municipalities was comprised of elected heads of local municipalities. One of its main goals was to present the Arab local agenda for Israeli authorities. However, its role was politically transformed after a group of young activists affiliated with the DFPE joined the organization. National political issues dominated the agenda of the National Committee in the years that followed (Al-Haj & Rosenfeld, 1990). The National Committee was not recognized by either the Arab community or the government as an institution representing all Palestinian Arabs in Israel.

In addition to the political partisan representation for the Palestinian minority, this group is also represented on a national basis by the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel. The High Follow-Up Committee was founded in 1982, mainly in response to emerging pressing political needs of the 1980s and as a direct result of the inclusion of new young political leaders in the National Committee for the Heads of Local Arab Authorities. At first the High Follow-Up Committee included local authority mayors in addition to Knesset members, including Arab Knesset members from Zionist parties and representatives of various other Arab sectors. Yet the National Committee for the Heads of Local Arab Authorities remained the main pillar of the High Follow-Up Committee.

Shawqi Khatib, previous head of the Follow-Up Committee, believes that the reason behind the creation of the committee was the banning of the Equality Convention in 1982. He states:

The Follow-Up Committee was founded in response to the Equality Convention. The Arab public wanted to organize such a convention, but the government perceived it as risky. As a result, it banned it by applying emergency and military laws. This was the context for the founding of the Follow-Up Committee, a response to the banning of the Equality Convention. In my view the Follow-Up Committee is the most important institution representing the Arab political agenda in Israel. This form of political activism has become possible due to the distinctive status of the Palestinian public in Israel. The particulars of this case are manifested in the fact that the Arab community lives in a state in which many of its institutions and apparatus practice daily discrimination against us. Our minority has limited material

resources. For that reason, there was a need to create a new form of leadership to include all political groups, organised on the basis of a common denominator, hence the significance of such an institution that allows Arabs to face political challenges and which clarifies the path for us. (S. Khatib, personal communication, April 1, 2008)

Khatib's statement clarifies that the Follow-Up Committee acts as a coordinator among the various Arab political parties in parliament and outside it. The decision-making process is based on consensus. This consensus is the secret behind its continued survival; without it, the committee would fail to meet the minimum requirements for its activities and struggle.

In October 2015 Mohamad Barakeh, the head of the DFPE and a leading member in the Communist Party, who served for fifteen years (1999–2015) as a member of Knesset, was elected as the new head of the Follow-Up Committee. Immediately after his election he stated that under his leadership the Follow-Up Committee would re-evaluate its status and activities and would re-organize in order to effectively realize the interests and demands of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel. Barakeh expressed his vision to gather Arab professionals, in addition to political representatives, committed to achieving the goals of the Follow-Up Committee: “[T]he institutions of the Follow-Up Committee are open for skilled and professional Arabs; for their plans, views and professional opinions. We all share the same process and action in order to serve the needs of our society” (M. Barakeh, personal interview, May 24, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Recent developments in the depth and spectrum of political organization and institutionalization in the Palestinian Arab minority society in Israel reflect a new era in the history of its political development, in two major senses. First, there is a basic estimation that the current Israeli right-wing government represents an actual threat to the rights of Palestinian Arab citizens in Israel. Second, the political elite of this community believe in their ability to present an enhanced level of conduct compared to the past, based on their “faith” in their ability and power to make a real change in their community.

Recent developments, including the establishment of the Joint List and its electoral achievement in the 2015 and 2019–2020 elections indicate a higher level of popular trust in the capacity of Palestinian Arab politicians to work together, a hope that requires a higher level of political performance from the leadership side.

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PART IV

ISRAEL AND
THE WORLD

CHAPTER 24

ISRAEL'S NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

CHUCK FREILICH

ISRAEL has faced a uniquely harsh external environment ever since its establishment. Numerous states have faced the danger of politicide (destruction of the state); Israel has also faced the threats of genocide and national extinction. The Arab states long threatened Israel's destruction; some still do, as do Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas. Recurrent wars and perpetual lower-level hostilities, the regional turmoil since the Arab Spring, and the Iranian nuclear program and new cyberthreat, as well as the failed peace processes with the Palestinians and Syria and even the "cold peace" with Egypt and Jordan, have kept national security at the forefront of Israeli life.

Israel has responded by developing defensive capabilities totally disproportionate to its size. From a besieged state in the early decades, fighting for its survival, Israel has become a regional power, its existence no longer truly in doubt. Israel has also maintained a vibrant democracy and become a prosperous state, a global center of high-tech innovation.

Perhaps surprisingly, Israel does not have a formal national security strategy. Attempts to formulate one have encountered various political and bureaucratic obstacles and have not reached fruition. Extensive strategic thinking does take place, but it tends to be more ad hoc, rather than part of a formal planning processes.

ISRAEL'S CLASSIC DEFENSE DOCTRINE

In the 1950s Israel's founding premier, David Ben-Gurion, formulated what has come to be considered its classic defense doctrine and the closest it has ever come to a formal national security strategy. Only partly elucidated in writing, and the product of a strategic environment that bears limited resemblance to Israel's current reality, that defense doctrine has had a major impact on the country's strategic thinking to this day.

Following is a composite picture of the initial doctrine and how it evolved in the early decades of Israel's existence (Ben-Israel, 2013; Handel, 1973; Heller, 2000; Maoz, 2006; see the chapter by Rabinovich in this volume.)

The classic doctrine viewed the Arab-Israeli conflict as uniquely long, bitter, and existential. From the beginning, Israel's leaders believed that the conflict would last for decades, possibly centuries, and that Arab enmity was so fundamental that there was nothing Israel could do to change it. The primary threat until the 1980s was of conventional attack(s) from the bordering Arab states, or a coalition thereof, with some support from others. During the early decades the threat of conventional wars occurred, on average, every eight years. Israel also faced ongoing terrorism (see the chapter by Tal in this volume).

Map 24.1 illustrates why Israel's geography was considered a strategic nightmare. Israel has always been tiny—slightly over 7,700 square miles in its pre-1967 borders, approximately the size of New Jersey or Slovenia—and remains tiny, at 9,600 square miles, even with the West Bank and Golan Heights. Israel is under 300 miles long. Its width varies, 80 miles at the widest and approximately 5 miles in the north; 8.7 miles near Tel Aviv, and only hundreds of yards at the southern tip.

Israel's narrow geography meant that its borders were virtually indefensible and that it could be overrun rapidly, by Syria in the north, Jordan in the center, and Egypt in the south. This danger was further exacerbated by the absence of natural obstacles and the generally adverse topography. Syria, atop the Golan Heights, had a commanding military presence dominating northern Israel. The West Bank was a deep salient extending into the very center of Israel. Jerusalem was surrounded on three sides. Gaza was just thirty miles from Tel Aviv.

Moreover, virtually everything that makes Israel a state is concentrated in the narrow, one-hundred-mile-long coastal plain. Some 70 percent of the population and 80 percent of the economic base are concentrated in this strip (Dayan, 2012), as are most governmental institutions, military installations, and national infrastructure. All are within artillery range of the West Bank and within minutes in flying time.

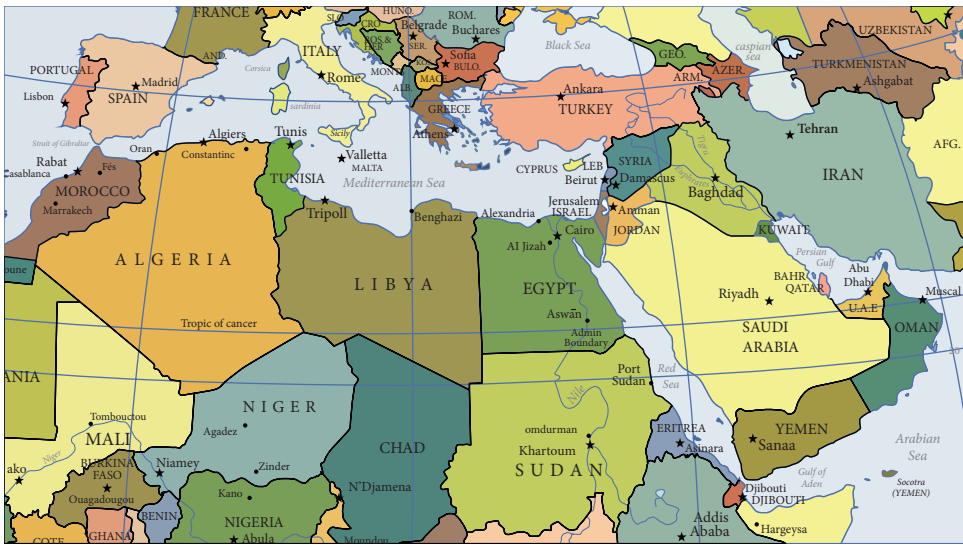
Map 24.2 demonstrates the fundamental strategic asymmetries between Israel and the Arab states. Given the vast disparities in territorial size, Israel could never completely conquer the Arabs; the opposite was not the case. Moreover, Israel lacked strategic and even tactical depth, and the Arabs had large standing armies, whereas Israel relied primarily on a reservist army. The asymmetry in population was similar. In 1948 Israel's Jewish population numbered only 630,000, compared to an Arab world of some 30 million (today 6.5 million Jews, versus 300 million Arabs, plus Iran). The Arabs were also able to draw on much larger economic resources, enabling them to sustain larger militaries.

The asymmetries were diplomatic, too. The Arab side enjoyed the support of the Arab and Moslem world, along with that of many Third World countries. The Soviets actively supported the Arabs, and any of the great powers might have intervened on their behalf in wartime, forcing Israel to terminate hostilities before it had achieved its objectives, or worse, after the Arabs had achieved theirs. Israel therefore had to prevent the Arabs from making even temporary gains and to achieve its objectives rapidly.



MAP 24.1 Israel's 1967 borders, with West Bank and Golan Heights.

Given these asymmetries, the classic doctrine presupposed that Israel could never compel the Arabs to accept its existence and terminate the conflict or even translate its military achievements into political objectives, let alone peace agreements. Indeed, the most Israel could realistically hope for was temporary respites between the rounds. The Arabs would only come to accept Israel's existence if ultimately forced to conclude that it could not be destroyed militarily.



MAP 24.2 The Middle East.

Israel's need for diplomatic and economic support, and especially weapons, made it vital that it acquire at least one great power patron. This, however, conflicted with the lesson from Jewish history that Israel was ultimately a "nation dwelling alone" and could only depend on itself for its security. Israel would thus have to maintain strategic autonomy, that is, the will and capacity to defend itself, by itself. Israel alone would be responsible for its defense and would not seek foreign troops, just the necessary weaponry.

The classic defense doctrine was fundamentally defensive, to ensure Israel's survival, but operationally offensive, to rapidly defeat its adversaries whenever hostilities broke out. Israel's deterrence was designed to show that attempts to destroy it would prove futile and through a cumulative process of repeated victories ultimately lead the Arabs to despair of ever defeating Israel and thus come to accept it. Arab enmity was presumed to be such that Israel's deterrence would fail every few years and hostilities would erupt, until Israel achieved the desired cumulative deterrence.

Israel could never compete with the Arabs quantitatively but could better marshal its resources. As a "nation in arms," Israel developed a multi-tiered military consisting of a small core of professionals, universal conscription, and mostly reservists and was thus able to maintain one of the world's largest militaries relative to its size.

A STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT TRANSFORMED

The 1967 Six-Day War was the first in a series of developments that transformed Israel's strategic circumstances. Until that time, the Arab world was largely united in its

commitment to Israel's destruction. The defeat in 1967 was so crushing, however, that it began a process of growing recognition that Israel was here to stay, changing the focus of the conflict from Israel's destruction to the attempt to regain the occupied territories. This process did not occur evenly among, or within, the Arab countries, and many still refuse to accept Israel's existence. It was, however, the beginning of a fundamental change that further gelled after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, in which Israel's recovery from a devastating surprise attack demonstrated that the Arabs could not regain the territories lost in 1967 by war, only by diplomacy.

The 1967 war provided Israel, for the first time, with some strategic depth. Israel was still tiny, but the West Bank now gave it more than thirty additional miles at its "narrow waist." The Golan Heights, just some eight to twelve miles wide, largely placed Israel's north beyond artillery range (though not beyond the range of rockets). Whereas Tel-Aviv had been within artillery range and Jerusalem even within small arms range, they were now far less vulnerable. The Sinai Peninsula created a 125-mile-wide buffer, even after being returned to Egypt following the 1979 peace agreement, when it was demilitarized.

The 1967 borders did not, however, prevent the surprise attack in 1973 or repeated hostilities since then, and they increased the Arab states' motivation to go to war, for unlike in the 1948 war, they had now lost territory of their own. Moreover, Israel's long-standing assumption that territory would serve as an incentive for negotiations ("land for peace") has only proven correct in regard to Egypt. Israel's willingness to withdraw from the Golan Heights in 2000 was insufficient to reach a deal with Syria, as was its willingness, on at least three occasions, to withdraw from Gaza and virtually all of the West Bank. In these circumstances, there was no point in trying to acquire additional territory for negotiating purposes.

In the 1970s and 1980s Israel's previously limited ties with the United States deepened dramatically, becoming the institutionalized and strategic relationship we know today, and in so doing transformed Israel's military capabilities and overall security. Ever since the 1980s the United States has been formally committed to preserving Israel's qualitative military edge (QME) over any combination of hostile Arab armies. American involvement in the region helped mitigate the conflict, promoted peace with Egypt and Jordan, contained and deterred regional aggressors and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs, and more (see the chapter by Stein in this volume).

The peace with Egypt further transformed Israel's strategic circumstances. The most powerful Arab state was now out of the conflict; once this had happened, the others no longer had a conventional military option against Israel. The collapse of the Soviet Union, which had been a close Arab ally and without which they had no military option to begin with, further undermined the Arab states' military posture. Syria abandoned its efforts to confront Israel on its own and instead sought other, indirect means, using Hezbollah as a proxy. Jordan, which had essentially ceased hostilities by the early 1970s, formalized this in a peace treaty in 1994.

Intensive peace talks with Syria and the Palestinians in the 1990s and 2000s ultimately failed, even leading to the bloody second intifada. Nevertheless, they showed many in

Israel that a diplomatic resolution might be possible. It also became increasingly clear that the conflict was not just a matter of Arab hostility, but also of Israel's policies, and domestic controversy over the peace process grew (see the chapters by Barak, Sela, and Perliger & Pedahzur in this volume).

The US defeat of Iraq in 2003 eliminated Israel's nightmare of a combined Syrian-Iraqi "eastern front" against it. The Syrian civil war then decimated its own military, essentially eliminating the final remaining conventional threat Israel faced.

Israel will always face fundamental asymmetries with the Arabs in population, territory, resources, and ability to form coalitions. The Arabs, however, have never succeeded in acting in concert, and today Israel has achieved conventional parity and even superiority against any likely adversary. The Arab states experienced decades of stagnation followed by the convulsions of the Arab Spring, and their future stability and in some cases even existence are in doubt. Many of the threats Israel faces today no longer stem from the Arabs' strengths, but from their weaknesses. Israel, conversely, has proven to be a stable and prosperous state.

ISRAEL'S CONTEMPORARY STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

Iran's carefully calculated approach to its long-term objective of weakening and ultimately destroying Israel, ongoing nuclear aspirations, massive support for Hezbollah, and expanding presence in Syria make it both the most sophisticated adversary Israel has ever faced and the greatest threat to its security today. If Iran goes nuclear, it will also be the only potentially existential one. A nuclear Iran might use nuclear weapons, or more plausibly just threaten to do so, thereby turning every limited confrontation in the future into a potentially existential one. A nuclear capability might also lead to generally more aggressive Iranian behavior and a greater capacity to determine regional events.

Moreover, if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, additional regional actors, primarily Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey, may also do so. A multi-nuclear Middle East is a nightmare scenario. Unlike the United States and Soviet Union, or India and Pakistan, Iran explicitly calls for its rival's (Israel's) destruction, and the likely proliferators in the region either have no channels for crisis communication and management or poor ones. Furthermore, Iran and Saudi Arabia are theocracies, and although they are probably "rational," rationality may be different when God is involved.

Lebanon's ongoing internecine conflicts and inability to control the terrorist organizations operating from its territory, especially the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from the late 1960s to the early 1980s and Hezbollah ever since, have posed a constant threat to Israel's security. Hezbollah's mammoth arsenal, estimated at between 100,000 and 150,000 rockets, is the greatest immediate threat to Israel today.

Syria's long-term future remains unclear, but it appears to be becoming both a Russian-dominated state and a forward operating base for Iran and Hezbollah—in

effect, part of one united front extending from Lebanon. The ramifications for Israel are severe and could lead to a direct confrontation with Iran. Iraq, too, is subject to great Iranian influence. The creation of a "Shiite crescent," extending from Iran, through Iraq and Syria, into Lebanon, presents a dangerous change in the regional balance of power.

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorism in Sinai and Hamas terrorism in Gaza have led to reports of unprecedented Israeli-Egyptian security cooperation (*Times of Israel*, 4/20/16; Amos Harel, *Haaretz*, 7/12/16). Egypt's crushing poverty and burgeoning population, however, mean that the long-term dangers to its stability are significant, with potentially dire ramifications for Israel. Jordan's poverty and the ongoing tensions with its Palestinian majority, further exacerbated by an influx of refugees from Syria and Iraq, continue to pose threats to its long-term viability. Jordan's role as a moderate neighbor and buffer between Israel and more radical actors to the east has made its stability a foremost Israeli interest.

The West Bank and Gaza have been under rival Palestinian governments for over a decade. The split has weakened the Palestinians, which is a tactical advantage for Israel but makes a final peace agreement almost impossible, until the Palestinians have one government authorized to represent them all and sign a peace agreement on their behalf. The long-term future of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, as a governing entity, is unclear. Gaza's demographic explosion and social tensions will continue to fan violence against Israel.

Saudi Arabia has long been deeply hostile to Israel and even dispatched limited military forces in past conflicts, but it has not posed a significant threat. This could change rapidly following regime instability or change. A combination of the Saudis' petro-influence and their arsenal of advanced American weapons could present new threats. Conversely, a convergence between Saudi and Israeli threat perceptions, primarily regarding Iran, has led to reports of quiet contacts and possibly even some indirect diplomatic coordination.

Most of the Arab countries today are, or are in danger of, becoming failed states, presenting heightened opportunities for external involvement both by state and nonstate actors. Iran, for example, is deeply involved in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen; Hezbollah in Lebanon; and Hamas in Gaza. Moreover, the root causes of the Arab Spring persist, indicating that the region will remain highly volatile for years and probably decades. Domestic instability, combined with weak governments, may increase the likelihood of hostilities. A particular concern is that limited conflicts with nonstate actors, which weak governments cannot prevent, may escalate into major confrontations.

American regional stature is at a decades-long nadir. It is certainly reversible, but long-term trends in the region will make that difficult, and it will take time. For Israel, whose security is so intimately linked to American standing, the ramifications may prove significant. As US influence has waned, Russia's has grown. Israel's relations with Russia are good, and Moscow has demonstrated some willingness to take its interests into account, for example, regarding the Iranian nuclear program, Syria, and the peace process. For the most part, however, Israeli and Russian interests clash and are likely to pose growing difficulties for Israel, requiring a delicate balance between accommodation with a resurgent Russia and the need to counter its deleterious actions.

Europe, both as a collective body and leading countries individually, is increasingly important for Israel. Europe played a critical role in the Iranian nuclear issue, and its long-standing opposition to Israel's West Bank policies has been a primary source of its deteriorating diplomatic standing. The EU is Israel's primary trading partner, and there are extensive political and, increasingly, military ties. Europe will continue to grow in importance for Israel, but in the absence of progress with the Palestinians, relations are likely to become even tenser.

China has yet to become a major factor in Israel's strategic (but not economic) calculus. Nevertheless, as a permanent member of the Security Council, China has adopted problematical positions on a number of issues of major importance for Israel, such as the Iranian nuclear issue. Its involvement in the region is likely to grow in coming years, primarily in regard to Iran and as its "One Belt One Road" policy evolves.

A campaign of diplomatic isolation and delegitimization is being waged against Israel. The campaign seeks to pressure Israel into changing its policies and to create a situation in which any Israeli use of force, even clearly defensive, is considered illegitimate. In so doing, it seeks to circumscribe Israel's freedom of maneuver and ability to even respond to terrorist attacks and other provocations. In the long term, the objective is to weaken and ultimately defeat Israel by eroding its international standing, isolating it and undermining the credibility of its positions in future negotiations and military confrontations.

The current campaign is a continuation of an Arab effort that began long before the 1967 war and the "occupation," in fact ever since Israel's establishment. Israel has been consistently portrayed as an illegitimate, brutal, and racist state. Positive Israeli attributes have long been denied or dismissed, its failures and weaknesses magnified. Israel has been compared to South Africa and even Nazi Germany, and its actions are regularly depicted as war crimes and genocide. The absurdity of the allegations notwithstanding, repetition carries a momentum of its own.

The international media have played an important role in the delegitimization campaign. Many highly biased reports on Israel are readily accepted, regardless of their validity and without verifying the facts. Gaining legitimacy in asymmetrical conflicts is particularly difficult. The causes of the hostilities are often blurred by the seemingly endless cycle of incidents, and the loss of innocent lives, caused by the intentional use of civilian populations as defensive shields, leads to a muddying of moral judgment. Israel, with an organized military, appears oppressive, while Hezbollah and Hamas are portrayed as heroic underdogs.

No issue has undermined Israel's international standing and played into the hands of its adversaries more than the West Bank settlement policy. Settlement activity has been viewed by the international community, including the United States, not only as gratuitously provocative, but also as counterproductive to Israel's own interests in achieving peace and security and preserving its Jewish and democratic character. Many in Israel agree.

If one looks just at the numbers, Israel is certainly not isolated. It has diplomatic relations with more countries than ever before and particularly strong ties with the United

States, Canada, Australia, Germany, Poland, Italy, Russia, Greece, and India, to name just a few, and a booming economic relationship with China. Israel enjoys an advanced association agreement with the European Union and has closer ties with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization than any other nonmember state. As noted, numerous reports also speak of growing Israeli ties with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. A number of African and Latin American countries have also begun strengthening ties with Israel (see the chapter by Shindler in this volume).

In the United Nations (UN) and other international forums, however, Israel is singled out for severe condemnation. In most years the General Assembly adopts resolutions regarding human rights violations in four or five countries. Israel is the focus of numerous resolutions each year. In 2012, twenty-two of twenty-six General Assembly resolutions on human rights were against Israel, as were twenty-one out of twenty-five in 2013. About one-third of all Security Council activity is similarly related to Israel, but virtually none is about such extreme violators of human rights as Saudi Arabia, China, and Zimbabwe (Freilich, 2018).

The demographic issue, stemming from Israel's control of the West Bank, is one of the greatest challenges it faces. There is no agreed definition in Israel regarding the percentage of the population that must be Jewish for it to retain its Jewish character. Many in Israel simply consider an overwhelming Jewish majority to be a sufficient criterion and have become used to the approximately 80 percent majority that has existed for decades. When the West Bank Palestinian population is added to Israeli Arabs, however, Jews constituted just some 60 percent of the combined total in 2015. Had Israel not withdrawn from Gaza, just 51 percent of the combined population (Israel, West Bank, and Gaza) would have been Jewish in 2015, a tiny minority that would have disappeared by 2025. These demographic ratios are projected to remain relatively constant until 2050 (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012; *Palestine 2030 Demographic Changes*, 2016: US Census International Data Base, n.d.a, n.d.b) and will in essence turn Israel into a binational state if it remains in control of the West Bank. There is no known solution to the challenge other than a separation of the two peoples, presumably on the basis of the "two-state" paradigm.

Today, Israel's conventional superiority is such that its adversaries no longer have an option to wage large-scale conventional warfare against it. Instead, they have identified Israel's civilian home front as its weak spot and developed a variety of asymmetrical responses specifically designed to target it, including terrorism, rockets and missiles, cyberwarfare, and WMD programs.

Terrorism has been a part of the conflict since long before Israel's establishment. The primary sources of terrorism have been the PLO in the past and Hezbollah and Hamas today, along with various other organizations. Overall, the percentage of Israelis killed by terrorism is higher than in any other democracy (Byman, 2011). Nonstate actors, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, and even state actors such as Syria and Iran, no longer pursue Israel's defeat in the near term, which they know to be unrealistic, but rather a long-term, irregular strategy of "attrition until destruction," which allows them to partially neutralize Israel's technological superiority and, through ongoing attacks on the home

front, to try to demoralize its population. By placing their rockets and other weapons among their own populations, they make the process of locating and destroying them very difficult and intentionally force Israel to cause civilian casualties when attacking them, thereby undermining its international legitimacy.

The overwhelming majority of Hezbollah's and Hamas's rockets are imprecise and are thus only capable of targeting population centers. Today, however, Hezbollah is also acquiring precision missiles that can target specific infrastructure and military sites. For the first time, this may provide one of Israel's enemies with the ability to disrupt Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) operations, *inter alia*, by attacking mobilization centers and air-bases; cause severe damage to Israel's economy by attacking infrastructure sites, such as power plants; and even disrupt the national decision-making process by attacking the General Staff headquarters or prime minister's office (Eiland, 2010; Elran & Altschuler, 2012).

As a nation that relies heavily on advanced technology, Israel is particularly vulnerable to cyberattacks and has been a primary target thereof. Indeed, Israel faces a nearly constant barrage of cyberattacks. Consequently, the cyber realm has rapidly come to occupy a significant place in Israeli defense thinking in recent years.

A huge conventional arms race is also under way in the region. Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states alone spent a whopping \$1.1 trillion on military expenditures between 2000 and 2014. The Saudi buildup is not a source of great concern to Israel at this time, but for the reasons previously noted, that could change. More important, Iran also has begun a rapid buildup of its own conventional forces.

In recent decades Israel has become increasingly disenchanted with territorial acquisition as an instrument of military policy. Any future war will take place in areas with large, hostile populations, and Israel has already encountered great difficulties in attempting to control such areas, leading to its decisions to withdraw unilaterally from Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005. Conversely, it is usually impossible to achieve victory without territorial conquest, so Israel has only conducted limited operations in recent decades, designed to temporarily alleviate threats, rather than maintaining the former emphasis on achieving rapid victory.

A related problem is that the *de facto* annexation of the West Bank, through settlement construction, has incorporated Palestinian violence into Israel itself, thereby undermining the strategic depth it gained in 1967. The West Bank and Golan Heights do still provide Israel with strategic depth against external threats, but this is less important against distant adversaries, such as Iran. Conversely, Iran's growing presence in Syria may change that.

THE ISRAELI RESPONSE

Israel's counterterrorism (CT) policy has long been predicated on the assumption that terrorism could never be fully suppressed, just reduced to a level that Israeli society

could tolerate. Its crowning achievement has been that it has enabled Israelis to live in relative security and thrive, almost without regard to terrorism. Arguably its main failure has been the major impact terrorism has had on Israeli public opinion, electoral outcomes, and positions in peace talks with the Palestinians.

Deterrence, prevention, and retaliation have long been at the heart of Israel's CT efforts. Offensive measures have been based on a highly honed ability to turn intelligence regarding impending attacks into concrete CT operations within minutes; there have been many reports of ongoing operations to interdict arms transfers and targeted killings of terrorist leaders and terrorists with special skills, such as explosive device makers. Defensive measures have included security fences, border patrols, and road-blocks. Israel's CT policy has also included extensive cooperation with other countries, especially the United States, and diplomatic pressure on host governments to curtail terrorism emanating from their territory.

Israel has built a multi-tiered response to the rocket and missile threats it faces. Offensively, Israel has developed a partial capability to destroy launchers, including mobile ones, albeit only after they have fired for the first time (Ben-Israel, 2013; Rubin, 2007), but it does not yet appear to have an effective capability against the vast arsenals of short-range rockets, which are far smaller and easily hidden in residential and other buildings. Israel has thus developed a variety of defenses. Passive defenses include shelters and "hardening" of various buildings and installations. Active defenses include a number of anti-rocket and anti-missile systems, such as the "Iron Dome." The biggest problem with these defensive systems is their cost, meaning that Israel will have to make painful choices between defending military capabilities necessary for warfighting and population centers or infrastructure sites.

Israel has responded rapidly to the cyberthreat, building up its offensive and defensive capabilities, along with its national educational and technological bases. The best known cyberattack attributed to Israel was the Stuxnet virus, reportedly launched in 2010 in collaboration with the United States, which damaged Iran's nuclear program (Fulghum, 2010; Farwell & Rohozinski, 2011; Parmenter, 2013).

Israel has long maintained a policy of "nuclear ambiguity," neither confirming nor denying that it possesses nuclear weapons. Instead, it merely reiterates that "Israel will not be the first country to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East." Israel is believed to have a second-strike capability based on a "triad" of nuclear weapons (Cohen, 2010; Rodman, 2005; Cordesman, 2008; Rapaport, 2010). Most observers consider Israel's purported nuclear capabilities a "doomsday option," to be used only as a last resort if its very survival is at stake (Bar Joseph, 2005; Beres, 2007; Cohen & Miller, 2010; Evron, 1994; Maoz, 2003, 2006). In practice, the policy of ambiguity is probably one of the most successful policies Israel has ever adopted, providing it with essentially all of the deterrent benefits of an overt nuclear posture, regardless of its true capabilities, without the attendant costs (Cohen, 2010; Cohen & Miller, 2010, 31; Bar-Joseph, 2004–2005, 2005).

The policy of ambiguity is an outgrowth, first and foremost, of Israel's relations with the United States. Under long-standing US law, it is required to essentially sever

relations, including military assistance, with nuclear proliferators (Haaretz, 1/5/14). Should Israel possess nuclear capabilities, its great dependence on the United States would make this a price it could hardly afford. Following years of pressure on Israel to sign the Nonproliferation Treaty and to divulge and dismantle its suspected nuclear capabilities, a compromise was reportedly reached in 1969, whereby the United States would cease its pressure on Israel in exchange for an Israeli commitment to refrain from declaring and testing its capabilities (i.e., maintaining “ambiguity”), not to provide nuclear weapons to third parties, or to threaten any other state with them (Cohen, 2010; Feldman, 1996; Cohen & Miller, 2010; Aluf Benn, Haaretz, 4/24/00, 2/18/01, 9/9/01, 3/13/01, 4/3/06, 12/19/08; Reuven Pedazur, Haaretz, 1/14/04; Yossi Melman, Haaretz, 12/13/06; Zeev Schiff, Haaretz, 8/24/00). Over time the United States has even come to provide political cover and a de facto political shield for Israel’s nuclear program (Cohen, 2010; Cohen & Miller 2010).

The likely Arab reaction is a further primary reason for Israel’s ongoing adherence to ambiguity. Indeed, an explicit Israeli posture might have united the Arab world against it as nothing else could have and would have exposed Arab leaders to strong domestic pressure to pursue nuclear capabilities of their own. Some attempted to do so anyway, but ambiguity made it easier for others to live with Israel’s purported capabilities (Dowty in Beres, 1986; Feldman, 1982; Feldman in Feldman & Toukan, 1997; Landau, 2013). It has also enabled many Western and even non-Western countries to treat Israel as an exceptional case (Cohen & Miller, 2010, p. 39; Cohen, 2010).

Most Israeli observers believe that Israel’s purported nuclear capabilities convinced the Arab states that its destruction was no longer a viable option and may thus have led to the Egyptian and Syrian decision to pursue only limited military objectives during the Yom Kippur War. Moreover, they are believed to have forced the Arabs to come to terms with Israel’s existence and, in Egypt’s and Jordan’s case, even to make peace and to refrain from using WMD against it. Israel’s purported capabilities may thus have reduced the intensity of the Arab-Israeli conflict and contributed to greater regional stability (Cohen, 2010; Zeev Schiff, Haaretz, 8/24/00; Yossi Melman, Haaretz, 12/13/06; Mintz & Shai, 2014; Steinberg, 1999; Ben-Dor in Bar-Tal, Jacobson, & Klieman, 1998; Evron, 1994; Dowty in Beres, 1986; Handel in Murray, Bernstein, & Knox, 1994; Maoz, 2003, 2006; Karpin, 2009).

Some feared that mutually assured destruction (MAD), the basis for US-Soviet nuclear stability during the Cold War, would prove destabilizing in the Middle East. Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union sought the other’s destruction, and both went to great lengths to avoid nuclear crises, including the establishment of real-time channels for crisis communication. Both were politically stable, thereby ensuring control over their nuclear weapons, and both had advanced command and control systems. They also developed assured second-strike capabilities, in whose absence they might have been motivated to launch a preemptive strike. Iran, in contrast, calls for Israel’s destruction, has no direct channels of communication with it, and is a radical theocracy. Moreover, the US-Soviet balance was bipolar, whereas a number of nuclear powers may emerge in the Middle East, thereby severely exacerbating the dangers.

Having faced numerous WMD threats, Israel attaches great importance to nonproliferation agreements and regimes; indeed, it is formally committed to a Middle Eastern WMD-free zone (Levite, 2010). Unlike India and Pakistan, Israel does not attach any inherent importance to nuclear power status, and its approach is entirely utilitarian. Its experience with arms control agreements, however, which have failed to prevent Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Libya from developing illicit WMD programs, has been extremely worrisome (Brom in Blechman, 2011; Levite, 2010). Israel thus argues that what is needed is not just a nuclear-weapons-free zone, as per the Arab position, but also comprehensive regional WMD and ballistic missile arms control agreements, to cover Arab and Iranian capabilities. It further believes that arms control should be the end result of regional peace and normalization, rather than the first step, as the Arab side has demanded (Ambassador Jeremy Issacharoff in Landau & Bermant, 2014; Bar, 2008; Bentsur, 1997; Feldman in Feldman & Toukan, 1997; Levite, 2010; Landau & Stein in Foradori & Malin, 2013).

In these circumstances, Israel's approach to arms control regimes has been mixed. Israel has not signed the Nonproliferation Treaty or the Biological Weapons Convention, despite expressing strong support for their principles (Feldman in Feldman & Toukan, 1997), but it has signed, although not ratified, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Conversely, Israel has supported international nonproliferation norms when it believed it could do so without undermining its security, for example, by harmonizing its nuclear export control legislation with that of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (Haim Levinson, Haaretz, 2/10/16 and 4/26/16; Landau & Stein, 2015; Cohen & Miller, 2010; Evron, 1994; Bar, 2010).

Prevention and counterproliferation are also primary components of what is perceived to be Israel's unconventional strategy, including diplomatic campaigns designed to convince leading international actors of the dangers posed by Arab and Iranian WMD programs. Indeed, Israel's efforts contributed to the imposition of international sanctions on Iraq's WMD programs and especially Iran's nuclear program. Numerous press reports have also referred to covert Israeli operations designed to sabotage, delay, and derail enemy WMD programs (Jerusalem Post 8/7/15; Haaretz 2/9/12; Julian Borger, Guardian 2/9/12; Israel Today 1/27/13; David Sanger, New York Times, 6/1/12). Perhaps the ultimate manifestation of Israel's counterproliferation policy is the "Begin Doctrine," its vow to prevent any hostile state in the region from acquiring a military nuclear capability. To this end, Israel destroyed an Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981 and a Syrian reactor in 2007 (Specter & Cohen, 2008; David Makovsky, The New Yorker, 9/17/12; David Sanger and Mark Mazzetti, New York Times, 10/14/07). Much press speculation surrounded the question of whether Israel would take military action against Iran's nuclear program.

Even if the United States had not withdrawn from the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran, Iran would have been better positioned to renew its program in 2025–2030, when the deal expired, and to break out in a relatively brief period. Following the US withdrawal, the future of the entire issue is entirely unclear and Israel must be prepared both for an Iranian nuclear "breakout," and the possible emergence of additional nuclear actors

in the region. Unlike the rogue-state proliferators of the past, the primary candidates are Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey, all US allies and important countries for a variety of reasons, and are thus essentially immune to attack. The Begin Doctrine may therefore have run its course, leaving Israel with painfully few future options, such as ending ambiguity, a defense treaty with the United States, or what appears entirely fanciful today, regional arms control.

The importance of the relationship with the United States for Israel's national security cannot be overstated (see the chapter by Stein in this volume). Israel is the largest beneficiary of American military aid in the post-World War II era. In the mid-2010s, US aid constituted some 40 percent of the IDF budget, a very large percentage in itself, but almost the entire procurement budget. At its core, US aid simply reflects the fundamental American commitment to Israel's security and survival. The United States, however, has never wanted to find itself in a situation in which it might actually be called upon to manifest this commitment through military intervention. Providing Israel with the weapons necessary to defend itself, by itself, has obviated this danger.

The United States and Israel engage in extensive, nearly unparalleled strategic dialogue, covering the peace process, WMD proliferation, terrorism, and much more. One would hardly expect a complete confluence of interests between a global superpower and a small regional player; the deep strategic dialogue notwithstanding, the relationship has been replete with disagreements. The United States has consistently demanded that Israel consult prior to taking action on important matters, and for the most part, it has done so. Both sides, however, have acted unilaterally at times.

The strategic dialogue has produced extensive areas of practical cooperation, including counterterrorism, counterproliferation, and rocket and missile defense. The United States and Israel conduct frequent joint military exercises, at times also with other states, and joint weapons development. In recent years the cyber realm has also become the focus of considerable cooperation. On the diplomatic level, the United States has protected Israel from an endless array of injurious UN resolutions and promoted relations between Israel and various countries. Most important, Israel appears to enjoy a *de facto* US security guarantee today.

In 2014 the United States formally designated Israel a "major strategic partner," a unique status yet to be granted to any other country with which the United States was not a treaty partner, although what this means in concrete terms remains unclear. The idea of a formal defense treaty has been mooted on a number of occasions, primarily as an American *quid pro quo* for Israeli concessions in the peace talks, but neither side has truly been interested in it.

Every US administration since 1967 has sought to promote the peace process, some intensively. The United States is committed to an Israeli withdrawal from most of the 1967 territories but has historically backed its view that Security Council Resolution 242, the internationally recognized basis for negotiations, does not necessarily require a complete withdrawal. Instead, American leaders have spoken of "defensible borders," "minor border adjustments," incorporation of the "settlement blocs," and more. The United States shares Israel's view that a peace agreement must address its security

concerns; opposes a significant return of Palestinian refugees, which would undermine Israel's character as a Jewish state; and has supported Israel's demand that the Palestinians recognize it as such. There are, however, significant differences even in these areas of overall agreement, and Jerusalem and the settlements have been issues of substantial disagreement.

Israel's dependence on the United States has become so great that it is questionable whether it could even survive today without the latter. There is no doubt that Israel would face an immeasurably more difficult and less secure existence. No other country would provide funding for and even sell Israel the weapons it needs or conduct the various forms of strategic cooperation previously described. No other power would provide Israel with diplomatic cover in virtually all international forums or even try to take a balanced position on the peace process. Maybe Israel could survive without the United States, but that would require major changes in its national order of priorities, with severe socioeconomic and military ramifications. The very fact that one can raise the question is what makes it so critically important.

The price of this remarkable "special relationship," however, has been a significant loss of Israeli independence. Israel can respond to limited events on its own, but all issues of importance require prior consultation and, usually, that Israel accord primacy to American policy. The few major exceptions to this rule have all been in regard to threats of an existential nature or issues of overwhelming domestic political importance for Israel. At least to some extent, demonstrations of Israeli independence today should be viewed not as defiance, but as a success of American policy. American military and diplomatic support has built a strong and prosperous Israel, increasingly confident of its security and existence, the true long-term objective of the "special relationship."

For Israel, the reality of dependence rubs against both its ethos of self-reliance and its concrete strategic needs. The United States is a generally reliable patron that tries to live up to its commitments, but it has failed Israel on important occasions, thereby demonstrating the strategic imperative of Israel's maintaining its independent capabilities. Israel can count on American support for its security, certainly for the medium term, but even a marginal change would have profound ramifications. Fundamental changes under way in American demography make the long-term trends worrisome from Israel's perspective.

Peace with the Palestinians, or at least separation, is critical for Israel's long-term security and character as a state but may also have significant security ramifications. There is little to suggest that a Palestinian state would be more stable, prosperous, and peaceful than other Arab states; indeed, it might become an irredentist one, actively seeking to redress past grievances. The emergence of a radical, Hamas-led terrorist entity in Gaza, which has fired thousands of rockets at Israel, is the living embodiment of every Israeli nightmare regarding a future Palestinian state in the West Bank. While this precedent cannot be allowed to determine the future, it also cannot be ignored.

Israel still faces daunting threats. It has yet to achieve peace with the Palestinians, the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in the absence of which it faces a long-term demographic threat to its character as both a Jewish and a democratic state. Iran poses a

uniquely difficult and severe threat and, should it go nuclear, the only potentially existential one Israel is likely to face. Nevertheless, in its seventies, Israel's national security strategy has been a historic success. Israel has won its existence, has achieved peace with two of its neighbors, enjoys a truly "special relationship" with the United States, and has ties with more states than ever before. It has also become a prosperous state and an international center of scientific and cultural creativity.

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CHAPTER 25

ISRAEL'S POLICY IN AND TOWARD THE WEST BANK AND THE GAZA STRIP

OREN BARAK

ON June 5, 1967, Israel launched a preemptive war against its Arab neighbors (except Lebanon) to defuse what most political and military leaders and large segments of the public in Israel regarded as an existential threat to the state. Within six days the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) defeated the armies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria and occupied vast Arab territories, including the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan, and the Golan from Syria. Thus, all areas that had been part of Mandatory Palestine until 1948 (and others, such as the Golan and the Sinai, not discussed here) came under Israel's control (see the chapter by Tal in this volume).

This chapter discusses Israel's policy in and toward the West Bank (and East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip (henceforth the Territories) from the Israeli–Arab War of 1967, when Israel occupied these areas that had belonged to Jordan and Egypt, respectively, to the present. The focus here is on the political-security realm, although the close interlinkages between this and other spheres (e.g., economic, social, and cultural-discursive) mean that these, too, are dealt with, albeit to a lesser extent.

The first question is whether or not Israel actually had a policy in and toward the Territories in this period. Over the last five decades, many policymakers and scholars have noted the hesitancy and ambiguity surrounding Israel's activities in and vis-à-vis the Territories, as well as the temporary nature of many measures that it has adopted in this context, and these facets of Israel's policy are mentioned later in the chapter. Nevertheless, after a half century of Israeli control over the Territories areas, it is quite clear that Israel did have such a policy, albeit a gradual, incremental one, characterized by a mix of formal and informal elements (Streeck & Thelen, 2005). This conclusion

should not come as a surprise to students of Israel, a state which, since its independence, has adopted such policies in numerous areas (Sharkansky, 1999), including immigration of non-Jews to Israel (Shapira, 2016; Shpaizman, 2014), the nuclear realm (Cohen, 2012), and the sacred spaces under its control (Shpaizman, Swed, & Pedahzur, 2016).

That Israel has had a policy in and vis-à-vis the Territories since 1967 can be deduced from the steps taken by consecutive Israeli governments in this period. These include national unity governments, which were in power in 1967–1970, 1984–1990, and for short periods after 2001, as well as “narrow governments” led by the Labor Party in 1970–1977, 1992–1996, and 1999–2001; the Likud Party in 1977–1984, 1990–1992, and 1996–1999 and since 2009; and Kadima in 2006–2009. Although there were some variations among these governments, from a broad historical perspective the elements of continuity exceeded the elements of change.

Who were the main actors that shaped Israel’s policy in and toward the Territories? First were the state’s institutions, including the political ones (the government and the Knesset) and the security agencies (the IDF, the General Security Service [GSS], and the Israeli Police [IP]). However, no less important was the role of informal “security networks” composed of acting and retired security officials and their civilian partners, whose impact on many spheres in Israel, and especially in the area of national security, has been considerable since 1948 and even greater since 1967 (Sheffer & Barak, 2013; see the chapters by Freilich and Peri in this volume). Among other actors who played a pivotal role in shaping Israel’s policy was the Settler movement (Pedahzur, 2012; Zertal & Eldar, 2004), not least because of its ability to win the support of, or simply bypass, Israel’s political institutions and to coordinate its actions with the security agencies and the aforementioned security networks.

Israel’s policy, in turn, was carried out by the state’s institutions, by quasi-informal organizations such as the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund, and by the settlers. As for other actors in Israel—including the court system, the official and private media, academic institutions, and civil society groups—these generally accorded legitimacy to the state’s policy, although some individuals and movements who were opposed to it (e.g., Peace Now, Yesh Gvul, and Gush Shalom) did emerge from time to time. Still, for all their efforts, these dissenters did not dramatically alter Israel’s policy (Gordon, 2008; Herman, 2009; Kretzmer, 2002; Sasson, 2005).

A key aspect of Israel’s policy in and vis-à-vis the Territories since 1967 has been the building and expansion of Israeli settlements, especially in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), and this issue is dealt with later in the chapter. However, no less important were other markers of Israel’s “presence” in the Territories, be they physical ones—such as military bases and other security installations, “bypass roads,” and other state infrastructures, most notably the “separation barrier,” which was built within, rather than outside, their purview—or legal ones, such as various laws, regulations, and military orders that sought to control the Palestinian inhabitants’ daily lives. The penetration of Israel’s security agencies (especially the IDF, GSS, and IP) into the Territories, which bolstered Israel’s hold over them, is also worth mentioning.

One of the reasons Israel's policy in and toward the Territories has been formulated and implemented in the aforementioned manner is the actual or expected responses from domestic and external actors. Since 1967, the Israeli public has been divided on the issue of the Territories, and this has prevented a more outspoken official policy in this realm (see the chapter by Pedahzur & Perliger in this volume). But the interests of outside actors, too, had to be considered. These included, first and foremost, the United States, Israel's patron, but also the Soviet Union (later Russia), European states (later the European Union), and the United Nations. In the Middle East, Israel had to contend with players such as Jordan and Egypt, who had ruled the Territories before 1967 and were interested in them later (Jordan disengaged from the West Bank in 1988 but still had interests there). Finally, Israel had to deal with actual and expected responses by the Palestinians in the Territories and, to a lesser extent, the Palestinian citizens of Israel and the Palestinians in the Diaspora (see the chapter by Sela in this volume).

The chapter is organized as follows. First I discuss Israel's policy in and vis-à-vis the Territories in the first decade after 1967, which in retrospect was its formative period. I then discuss the four decades that followed, identifying elements of continuity and change in Israel's policy during this period. This is followed by an examination of the major challenges to Israel's policy: the first Palestinian intifada in 1987, the Israeli–Palestinian peace process in the 1990s, the second intifada in 2000, and Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005. The concluding section assesses the cumulative impact of Israel's policy in and toward the Territories and tries to situate the Israeli case in a broad theoretical and comparative perspective.

THE MAKING OF ISRAEL'S POLICY

In the first decade after Israel occupied the Territories, its policy in and vis-à-vis these areas, which were placed under military rule (except East Jerusalem), was marked by considerable hesitancy. On the one hand, the government of national unity, established on the eve of the 1967 war, did not offer to concede the Territories in return for peace with the Arabs, which it did, at least initially, with regard to other occupied areas such as the Sinai and the Golan. On the other hand, Israel, although claiming that from a legal standpoint the Territories were not “occupied” but “disputed,”¹ refrained from formally annexing them, with the exception of East Jerusalem, which was “unified” with the city's western part (Gorenberg, 2006; Pedatzur, 1996; Segev, 2007).²

These characteristics of Israel's policy in this period can be attributed to the political disagreements within its government regarding the future of the Territories. Some ministers, mainly Yigal Allon and Moshe Dayan, both retired army generals, argued that Israel should keep at least part of the Territories, which they deemed vital for its security. But other ministers, including Yaacov Shimshon Shapira, Abba Eban, and Zalman Aran, believed that incorporating these areas' inhabitants into Israel would lead to its demise

(Pedatzur, 1996; Segev, 2007). Still other leaders wavered. A telling example is Prime Minister Levy Eshkol, who wished to keep parts of the Territories under Israel's control but had no idea how it could rule them without controlling the Palestinians (Gorenberg, 2006). At any rate, the result of these differences has been the lack of a formal Israeli decision regarding the Territories from 1967 to this day.

But for some actors in Israel, driven by security considerations, national and religious values, materialist goals, or a combination of these factors, the political leaders' indecisiveness with regard to the Territories did not mean that the actors themselves could not try to shape the future of these areas to Israel's—and also to their own—benefit. Moreover, these actors soon discovered that if they joined together they would stand a better chance of realizing their goals.

First among these actors were Israel's security agencies (especially the IDF and the GSS) and the aforementioned security networks. Already in the “waiting period” that preceded the 1967 war, these actors had sidelined Israel's civilian leaders by removing Prime Minister Eshkol from the post of defense minister and appointing Dayan, a former chief of staff of the IDF, in his place (Gluska, 2007). After the war, which made the IDF and its commanders national heroes in Israel, the security officials—both acting and retired—became responsible for all decisions regarding the principles of future agreements with the Arabs. The fact that many in Israel, including in its government, regarded the Territories as a “deposit” that could be used to solve at least a part of Israel's security problems empowered the “security experts” not only in relation to these areas but also generally (Pedatzur, 1996; Sheffer & Barak, 2013).

But there were also practical reasons for the “securitization” of the Territories after 1967. Israel's leaders were informed by their legal advisers that confiscating Palestinian lands and building Israeli settlements in these areas contravened international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949). Hence, Israel's actions in these areas had to be justified on security grounds. In this way, the government also ensured that its own discussions and decisions relating to the Territories, including building settlements and other concessions that it had made to the settlers, would remain secret (Gorenberg, 2006; Pedatzur, 1996; Segev, 2007).

The result of these actions was that day-to-day policymaking in and vis-à-vis the Territories was taken over by informal policymaking bodies in which “security experts” were dominant. Moreover, ministers Allon and Dayan, along with other members of Israel's security networks (e.g., Israel Galili), began to pursue a more activist policy in and vis-à-vis the Territories, including channeling generous sums of money from the defense budget for settlement purposes (Sheffer & Barak, 2013).

Beginning in 1967, moreover, Israel's security agencies governed the daily lives of the million and a half Palestinians in the Territories, with minimal civilian oversight. Officially, this was done through the Military Administration, a new body headed by a high-ranking IDF officer who held the title Coordinator of the Government's Activities in the Territories (Gorenberg, 2006; Segev, 2007). As for this body's goals, Shlomo Gazit, its first head, later wrote that “the most practical and important expression of our presence in the Territories was a gradual process of turning Israel and the Territories

into one unit, with free movement from and to the Territories, for both Jews and for Arabs" (Gazit, 2016).

As is often the case in Israel, the "security experts," while concurring that the Territories were critical for Israel's security, disagreed on the best way to promote the country's interests there. Dayan and Allon, who belonged to different and indeed rival parties, held quite divergent views on this matter, and each tried to promote his own plan for settling the parts of the Territories that he deemed crucial for Israel's security. Allon claimed that the Jordan River should be Israel's security border and called for settling the Jordan Rift. As for Dayan, he attached greater importance to the mountainous areas of the West Bank and promoted the building of settlements there. He also worked to deepen the economic integration between the Territories and Israel so as to make separation between them more difficult (Gorenberg, 2006; Pedatzur, 1996). The same goal was advanced by Israel's Open Bridges policy, which allowed goods, especially agricultural products and people, to move from the Palestinian Territories to Jordan and other Arab states (Gorenberg, 2006; Segev, 2007).

The disagreements among these security officials notwithstanding, Allon, Dayan, and also Galili, with the active cooperation of senior officials in the IDF, in the Jewish Agency's Settlement Department, in the agricultural sector, and of course, among the settlers, became so effective in promoting their own policy in and vis-à-vis the Territories that Eshkol felt "that there is the one government and there is the security government" (Pedatzur, 1996). Moreover, as a result of the disagreements between Allon and Dayan, Israeli settlements were built in the Jordan Rift according to Allon's plan and in the mountainous areas according to Dayan's plan.

The second type of actors involved in the Territories since 1967 were individuals and groups located on the center right and far right of Israel's political spectrum. These actors, who saw Israel's success in the 1967 war as a divine victory, were elated by the imposition of Jewish control, for the first time since 1948, over sacred spaces such as the Western Wall in East Jerusalem, Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, and the Cave of the Patriarchs (or the Ibrahimi Mosque) in Hebron. Thus, in the wake of the 1973 war, political entrepreneurs with a communal agenda established the Settler movement, whose declared goal was to settle the Territories so as to make them inseparable from Israel. One reason for the success of the Settler movement was that from the outset it enjoyed the support of prominent Israeli writers, poets and artists, journalists, and religious leaders, as well as of political leaders who regarded it as the new vanguard of the Zionist movement. In addition, given the power of the IDF and the security networks in Israel and the Territories, the settlers coordinated their activities with them so as to create "facts on the ground" that could not be undone (Gorenberg, 2006; Sheffer & Barak, 2013).

There were, however, other actors in Israel, particularly on the left of the political spectrum, who were alarmed by what they regarded as Israel's "colonialist" project in the Territories. In 1968, only a year after Israel's occupation of the Territories, Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz, a leading public thinker, voiced his concern over the possible transformation of the Israeli state if it were to hold onto these areas:

A state ruling a hostile population of 1.5 to 2 million foreigners would necessarily become a secret-police state, with all that this implies for education, free speech and democratic institutions. The corruption characteristic of every colonial regime would also prevail in the State of Israel. The administration would suppress Arab insurgency on the one hand and acquire Arab Quislings on the other. There is also good reason to fear that the Israel Defense Force[s], which has been until now a people's army, would, as a result of being transformed into an army of occupation, degenerate, and its commanders, who will have become military governors, resemble their colleagues in other nations. (Leibowitz, 1992)

In 2012 Yuval Diskin, a former GSS director, admitted that he “agreed with every word” in Leibowitz’s statement.³

We see, then, that in the first decade after the 1967 war and Israel’s occupation of the Territories, Israel’s policy in and toward these areas was consolidated. Whereas Israeli leaders refrained from formally annexing the Territories (except East Jerusalem), consecutive governments tightened Israel’s grip over them and sought to make them practically inseparable from Israel. In addition to alleviating tensions within Israeli society, this policy helped avoid external pressure for a quick Israeli withdrawal from the Territories, especially by the United States. In contrast to 1956, when the superpowers had compelled Israel to withdraw from the Sinai, the United States was reluctant to propose its own solutions to the Arab–Israeli conflict or to pressure Israel to return to the pre-1967 borders before a solution acceptable to it was found (Gorenberg, 2006). Thus, Israel could pursue its policy with few outside constraints.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Despite their rhetoric, according to which the Territories are a “deposit” that could be returned in exchange for peace, successive Israeli governments have sought to transform these areas so as to make them practically inseparable from Israel. This was evident in the official discourse in Israel, where the term “East Jerusalem,” which had been employed since 1949, was abandoned, and Jerusalem, whose area was significantly enlarged, was referred to as one “unified” city (Benvenisti, 1986; Khalidi, 1997). As for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, they were called “Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District” so as to emphasize Israel’s ownership of them (Tsur, 2013; Weizman, 2012). In addition, Israeli officials referred to the Territories as an integral part of the Jewish homeland. This policy was reflected in the fact that most Israeli maps published after 1967 omitted the Green Line, Israel’s pre-1967 border, and many ignored the Palestinian cities and towns lying beyond it (Gordon, 2008; Lustick, 1993; Zertal & Eldar, 2004).

At the same time, the state’s agencies sought to physically erase the boundaries separating the Territories from Israel, such as by redrawing the municipal boundaries in Jerusalem to include the eastern part of the city and several Arab villages and by impos-

ing Israel's jurisdiction over this area but without granting Israeli citizenship to its Palestinian inhabitants. These steps were further emphasized when Israel built numerous military bases and civilian settlements in the Territories, first in areas that the "security experts" deemed strategically important for Israel's security but later also in others, including in and around the major Palestinian cities and towns. In addition, successive Israeli governments built roads and other infrastructures throughout the Territories, which mostly served the IDF and the settlers. As done within Israel since 1949, this was achieved through massive confiscation of Palestinian lands due to "security considerations," but without formally annexing the Territories. Israel also assumed control over all land and water resources in the Territories and over their residents' relations with the outside world (Efrat, 2006; Elad, 2015; Gordon, 2008). Writing about the period 1967–1987, James Ron concluded that "Israel consolidated its infrastructural regime of power over Palestine by sealing the enclave's external borders, crushing internal armed resistance, rationalizing its mechanisms of control, and integrating its economy" (Ron, 2003; see also Gordon, 2008; Klein, 2014; Ranta, 2015).

As a result of Israel's policy, the number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank increased steadily, from 4,400 in 1977, to 16,200 in 1981, to 35,300 at the end of 1984, to almost 60,000 by the end of 1987. This number increased again later, to 100,000 by 1992, to 110,900 by the end of 1993, and to 191,600 by the end of 2000, suggesting that it almost doubled during the Israeli–Palestinian peace process (B'Tselem, 2002). Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005 (discussed in the section on "Challenges and Responses") included the dismantling of all twenty-one settlements built there and four small settlements in the West Bank, as well as the evacuation of 8,000–9,000 settlers, less than 4 percent of the total settlers in the Territories. However, apart from these four settlements, not one formal (i.e., government-sanctioned) settlement that Israel had built in the West Bank since 1967 was dismantled. Thus, by the end of 2017 about 413,400 Israelis lived in the West Bank, and at the end of 2014 an additional 209,270 lived in the Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, suggesting that the total number of Israelis living in the Territories had reached 622,670 (B'Tselem, 2019).

As for the number of Israel's settlements in the Territories, by 1992 it had reached 120, and this figure remained more or less constant until the end of 2017, when there were 131 settlements in the West Bank (those in the Gaza Strip were demolished in 2005) (B'Tselem, 2019). However, by then there were also about 110 "unauthorized outposts"—that is, informal settlements—throughout the West Bank (B'Tselem, 2019). This type of settlement began to emerge during the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, when Israel tried (per a government decision in 1992) to impose strict limits on building new settlements in the Territories and expanding existing ones, but did allow construction to meet the "natural growth" of the Jewish population in these areas (B'Tselem, 2002). Importantly, these "unauthorized outposts," too, were often built with the knowledge and assistance of at least some of the state's institutions, and apart from a few exceptions, they were not dismantled later; instead, attempts were made to formalize them (Sasson, 2005). To these settlements, formal and informal, one can add eleven large Jewish neighborhoods built in the Palestinian areas that Israel annexed to the Jerusalem

municipality in 1967 and several Jewish enclaves built within Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and Hebron, with aid from the government and from the Jerusalem municipality (B'Tselem, 2019).

As for the Palestinians in the Territories, they were not offered Israeli citizenship after 1967 and thus were excluded from Israel's political system. Only the Palestinians in Jerusalem became Israeli residents, but they could not vote for the Knesset, and most of them boycotted the municipal elections. Also, until the 1990s Israel did not permit the Palestinians in the Territories to openly identify with the Palestinian national movement, and Israel's security agencies forcefully prevented Fatah, the major Palestinian armed faction, as well as smaller groups, from taking root there, including by tolerating their Islamist competitors, who later established the radical Islamic movement Hamas (Gordon, 2008; Mishal & Sela, 2000; Sela, 2014). While some Israeli leaders (e.g., Shimon Peres of the Labor Party) supported a "Jordanian option"—that is, a form of Jordanian control over the Palestinians—others (especially in the Likud Party) fostered the emergence of local leadership in the Territories, particularly in the late 1970s and early 1980s, so as to create a counterweight to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO); they failed due to the latter's resistance (Gordon, 2008; Gorenberg, 2006; Pedatzur, 1996; see also the chapter by Sela in this volume). Israeli governments did, however, succeed in attracting Palestinian laborers to work in Israel and in the settlements, including by offering incentives to Israeli firms that invested there.

As mentioned previously, the formal Israeli body set up to govern the Territories was the Military Administration (later renamed the Civil Administration), but it was up to the IDF and the GSS to impose Israel's effective control over the Palestinians there. Before 1967, the GSS had mostly dealt with domestic security, reinforcing Jewish control over Israel's Palestinian community, and the IDF had defended the state's borders. But now both agencies sought to control the Palestinians in the Territories, a community that was significantly larger than Israel's Palestinian community and which was offered much more limited political options. Consequently, the IDF and the GSS began to resort to various measures such as mass arrests and detentions (some without trial) of Palestinians, forced deportations of Palestinian activists, house demolitions, torture, and various forms of collective punishment (e.g., curfews and sieges). Consequently, Israel and the Palestinians were caught in a vicious cycle of suppression and resistance (Barak, 2017; Bregman, 2014; Gazit, 2016; Gordon, 2008; Ranta, 2015; Ron, 2003).

Although Israel's control over the Territories became more entrenched after 1967, the means used to exert this control changed (Ron, 2003). Thus, for example, in the period after 1993, following the Oslo Accords, Israel's control over the Territories became more indirect, and Israeli troops were not always present in all areas but controlled them by sealing their "borders" with Israel; by erecting barriers and checkpoints within them; and by launching military operations, after which Israeli units returned to their bases. Also, Israel delegated the task of controlling at least part of the Territories to other actors, including the Palestinian forces set up after the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994, but also militias set up by the settlers, which sometimes cooperated with Israel's security services but at other times acted autonomously from them (Gordon, 2008; Ron, 2003).

Later, during the second Palestinian intifada, and following a wave of Palestinian suicide bombings against Israel, the latter's leaders decided to construct a massive, 712-kilometer-long "separation barrier" built mainly on Palestinian lands (Ben-Eliezer, 2012; B'Tselem, 2017). However, even then Israel retained its military and civilian presence on both sides of the barrier. Other methods of control that Israel employed in this period included the close monitoring of Palestinian groups and individuals by its security agencies and the extensive use of observations, overflights, eavesdropping, unmanned drones, and naval vessels in, over, and around the Territories. In addition, Israel launched commando raids against ships and convoys headed to the Territories to prevent the smuggling of arms and other supplies to the Palestinian armed factions and later also to enforce the blockade against the Gaza Strip after its takeover by Hamas.

One important consequence of the increase in the number of Israeli settlements and settlers in the Territories and Israel's deepening control over these areas has been the increased geographical and political fragmentation of the Palestinian community. Indeed, during this period East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, as well as smaller regions within them, became distinct and loosely connected areas, and the Palestinians in them were subject to different security, legal, and economic measures (Benvenisti, 2007). This process was accelerated after the establishment of the PNA, Israel's "closure" policy, the construction of Israel's "separation barrier," and Hamas's takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007. It was also facilitated by Israel's close ties, including in the area of security, with Egypt and Jordan. At the same time, the Palestinian economy continued to be highly dependent on Israel, which dominated numerous other spheres, such as water, land, natural resources, and the environment (Selby, 2003).

We see, then, that Israel's policy toward the Territories was marked by considerable continuity. Although successive Israeli governments refrained from annexing these areas, either because they were worried that Israel would lose its Jewish majority or because they were fearful of a domestic and external backlash (annexing territories remains forbidden by international law), Israel continued to maintain its hold over these areas, claiming that they were crucial for its security, and continued to build settlements and other installations there, including during the Israeli–Palestinian peace process. Importantly, Israel's security officials continued to cooperate with the settlers, and it was observed that "behind every settlement action there is a planning and thinking mind that has access to the state's database and maps, and help from sympathetic officers serving in key positions in the IDF and the Civil Administration"; "the story is not in the settlers' uncontrolled behavior... but rather in conscious choices by the state to enforce very little of the law" (Harel, 2009).

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

During the first two decades of Israel's occupation of the Territories, its policy was met with limited (albeit not insignificant) resistance by the Palestinian inhabitants. However,

in December 1987 Israel's policy was put to the test with the outbreak of the first Palestinian intifada, a popular uprising that stemmed from the Palestinians' political, social, and economic grievances.⁴ Yitzhak Rabin, a former chief of staff of the IDF who served as Israel's defense minister at that time, believed that the intifada would be a passing phase, and he instructed the IDF to suppress it. However, the IDF was only partially successful at that task, and a number of "security specialists," Rabin included, concluded that the intifada could not be quashed militarily.

After several years of political deadlock in Israel/Palestine and several major external developments, including the end of the Cold War, the First Gulf War, and the Madrid Conference in 1991, but also domestic changes, most notably the victory of the Labor Party led by Rabin in the 1992 Israeli elections and further violence between Israelis and Palestinians, the Israeli government and the PLO launched secret talks in Norway that led to the signing of the Oslo Accords on September 13, 1993.⁵

For many Palestinians, including the PLO's leaders, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process was supposed to achieve the same goals as the intifada, namely, a full Israeli withdrawal from the Territories. Indeed, PLO leader Yasser Arafat repeatedly called on Prime Minister Rabin to agree to a "Peace of the Brave," implying that Rabin, a former general, should follow in the footsteps of President Charles de Gaulle, also a former general, who had pulled France out of Algeria in the 1960s. But these expectations, which some Israelis, especially on the center left of the political spectrum, shared, did not materialize.

First, it was not at all clear that Israel's leaders intended to play the role that the Palestinians expected them to play. In early 1993, Rabin had expressed his hope to "find a partner which will be responsible in Gaza for the internal Palestinian problems. It will deal with Gaza without the problems of the High Court of Justice, without the problems of *B'Tselem* and without the problems of all kinds of sensitive souls and all kinds of mothers and fathers" (Kretzmer, 2002; see also Gordon, 2008).⁶ Indeed, from Israel's perspective, Arafat and the PLO were useful since they could rule over the Palestinians in the Territories and, if needed, restrain anti-Israeli actions, while Israel, the stronger party, would ensure that Arafat and the PLO would play along and at the same time wash its hands of their actions (Gordon, 2008; Kimmerling, 2001; cf. Barnett, 1999). However, Israel's hopes were fulfilled only in part (Sela, 2014).

Second, despite some progress made in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in the 1990s, the Palestinians in the Territories came nowhere near achieving an independent state and instead found themselves trapped in a "transitional period" that was extended time and again by Israel, the more powerful side. The inability to gain tangible results through negotiations in turn prompted some Palestinian factions (especially Hamas) to resort to violence against Israel or to turn a blind eye to it (the PNA), perhaps in order to induce the Algerian "model" and/or to preserve the fragile consensus in their community.

Third, Israel's moves toward the Palestinians, which included partial withdrawals in the Territories, elicited resistance from actors on the right and far right of Israel's political spectrum, culminating in Rabin's assassination in 1995. Underpinning this resistance

were deep feelings of insecurity in Israel, especially in view of the proximity of the West Bank to Israel's population centers; the significance of the Territories for many Israelis' identity; and a lack of trust toward the Palestinians, heightened by deadly attacks, especially by Hamas (Barak, 2005; Ben-Eliezer, 2012).

In the wake of Rabin's assassination and after several years of political impasse under the governments of Shimon Peres (1995–1996) and Benjamin Netanyahu (1996–1999), a new government, led by Ehud Barak, who like Rabin was a former chief of staff of the IDF, was formed, and hopes for Israeli–Palestinian peace were renewed. However, a summit held at Camp David in July 2000 by Prime Minister Barak, PLO chairman Arafat, and US president Bill Clinton ended in failure, and after a provocative visit by Member of Knesset Ariel Sharon of the Likud Party to al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the peace process collapsed. Mass Palestinian demonstrations in the Territories and in Israel were met with massive Israeli violence, and “[t]he violence of the other side justified each side’s escalation of violence to defeat the other” (Kriesberg, 2002).

During the second Palestinian intifada (or al-Aqsa intifada),⁷ thousands of Palestinians and Israelis were killed and wounded, with both sides killing more civilians than combatants. According to Uri Ben-Eliezer, between September 30, 2000, and October 31, 2005, a total of 3,729 Palestinians were killed by Israel and nearly 25,000 were wounded, and less than one-third of the Palestinians who died had taken part in the fighting. On the Israeli side, 1,064 were killed, of whom 70 percent were civilians, and an additional 7,462 were wounded (Ben-Eliezer, 2012). In addition, many thousands, especially Palestinians, lost their homes and their property. Attempts to renew the peace process between the two rival communities in subsequent years, especially during the period of Ehud Olmert’s premiership (2007–2008), as well as several other initiatives, have all failed to break the impasse (Podeh, 2015).

Following mounting domestic and external pressures, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon decided, despite considerable domestic opposition, on the “Disengagement Plan,” a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and a few small settlements in the West Bank. Thus, in August 2005 several thousand settlers were evicted from the Gaza Strip, together with several hundred settlers from four small settlements in the West Bank. However, Israel’s unilateral withdrawal, which according to Sharon’s senior adviser was specifically designed to freeze the peace process with the Palestinians (Shavit, 2004), did not lead to the delineation of an international border between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Two years later, in 2007, Hamas took over the area from the PNA, and since then Hamas, the *de facto* ruler of the Gaza Strip, has fought Israel several times, in 2008–2009, 2012, and 2014, with each military confrontation being more bloody and devastating than the one before (Ben-Eliezer, 2012). Israel, for its part, imposed a land and sea blockade on the Gaza Strip, leading some actors to regard this area as subject to Israeli occupation and resulting in clashes with international activists who tried to break the siege, most notably during Israel’s Gaza flotilla raid in 2010.

The election of President Donald J. Trump in the United States in November 2016 heralded a significant change in US policy toward the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and,

interconnectedly, in Israel's policy in and toward the Territories. Previously, and as shown throughout this chapter, Israel's policy in this realm was largely *informal*, and its leaders generally refrained from formally annexing the Territories, or parts thereof (except East Jerusalem; see above), due to possible domestic or external backlash, with the latter emanating primarily from Israel's patron, the United States.

However, a series of steps taken by the Trump administration, which signaled a profound change in US policy concerning the *formal* status of the Territories, led to parallel changes in Israel's policy in this realm. In December 2017, the United States recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and in May 2018 it relocated the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (White House, 2018). However, the most profound change was the announcement in January 2020 of a new US plan for comprehensive Israeli–Palestinian peace. The plan stated that both Israel and the United States “do not believe the State of Israel is legally bound to provide the Palestinians with 100 percent of pre-1967 territory” and that Israel “will not have to uproot any settlements, and will incorporate the vast majority of Israeli settlements into contiguous Israeli territory.” Indeed, the plan stipulated that “[a]pproximately 97% of Israelis in the West Bank will be incorporated into contiguous Israeli territory” (White House, 2020).

This change in US policy, which was followed by pro-Israeli statements by US officials (e.g., by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who stated in March 2020 that annexing parts of the West Bank is “ultimately Israel's decision to make”; see Tibon & Khoury, 2020), led to calls by Israeli leaders to “impose Israel's sovereignty” over the Territories, or parts thereof (especially the Jordan Valley, but also Israeli settlements in the West Bank). Indeed, such a move was included in the draft coalition agreement signed between Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party and Benjamin Gantz's Blue and White party in April 2020, although it was added that such a step would be taken according to an agreement that would be reached with the United States (Knesset, 2020).

BROADER IMPLICATIONS

What are the broader implications of Israel's policy in and toward the Territories since 1967? An examination of several works on Israel, Israel/Palestine, and Israeli–Palestinian relations suggests quite divergent approaches to this question (see the chapter by Dowty in this volume).

The first approach views Israel as an essentially democratic (and Jewish) state, despite its continued occupation of the Territories. Indeed, these works posit that the occupation, however significant, does not detract from the democratic (and Jewish) characteristics of Israel's regime, but rather is one of several “unsolved problems” that Israel has been grappling with since its independence. In other words, from this perspective, Israel is still a nation-state, and its presence in the Territories is temporary. More broadly, this view considers Israel to be a Western state and moreover one that is comparable to Western democracies and more established states in general (see, e.g., Galnoor &

Blander, 2013; Gavison, 1999; Nikolenyi, 2013; Spruyt, 2014). It should be noted, however, that some writers who adhere to this approach acknowledge the shortcomings of Israel's regime, which they define as an "ethnic democracy," and draw parallels between Israel and less-established democracies (Smootha, 1997, 2002; see also Peled, 2014). Still, their overall conclusion is that Israel is a democratic state, notwithstanding over fifty years of Israeli occupation of the Territories.

A second approach also accepts Israel's democratic character but regards its regime as highly problematic, mainly, but not exclusively, on account of its occupation of the Territories and its profound impacts in many spheres, including politics, society, the economy, and culture. While this second group of scholars also compares Israel to more established states in the West, its focus is on states that have experienced major crises on account of their expansion and their attempts to contract in later periods. In particular, these writers draw parallels between Israel and France during the Algerian War (1954–1962), suggesting that Israel's predicament can also be solved by a general-turned-statesman who would extract it from the Territories (Bar-Tal & Schnell, 2013; Ben-Eliezer, 2012; Gordon, 2008; Lustick, 1993; Zertal & Eldar, 2004). Interestingly, Palestinian writers and political leaders also adopted the Algerian "model," during the 1960s, when autonomous Palestinian political factions emerged emulating the National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale), and again in the 1990s (see, e.g., Bishara, 2001).

Finally, a third group of scholars posits that the "facts on the ground" created by Israel in the Territories since 1967 have turned Israel/Palestine into "one state," albeit informal in nature (Azoulay & Ophir, 2012; Benvenisti, 1986, 2007; Faris, 2013; Judt, 2003; Klein, 2010, 2014; Ron, 2003; Shenhav, 2012; Tilley, 2005; Yiftachel, 2006). Consequently, some of these authors raise doubts concerning Israel's democratic character (for them, Israel is in any case a formal or electoral democracy and not an effective or liberal democracy), and some posit that Israel/Palestine is an "ethnocracy" (i.e., a nondemocratic entity; Yiftachel, 2006). Accordingly, some writers compare Israel/Palestine to other divided societies in which one community is dominant, such as South Africa under apartheid (Badran, 2009; Greenstein, 1995; Guelke, 2012); Serbia (Ron, 2003); and other territories that have witnessed intercommunal conflict and peace, such as Northern Ireland (Ben-Porat, 2006; Guelke, 2012). Others draw parallels between Israel and other postcolonial states in the Middle East that expanded, including Lebanon (1920–), Morocco and Western Sahara, Turkey and North Cyprus, and Jordan and the West Bank (1949–1967) (Barak, 2017; see also Becke, 2014).

NOTES

1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2003).
2. In 1981 the Golan was also brought under Israel's jurisdiction. On the legal aspects of Israel's occupation of the Territories, see Rubin (2009).
3. Quoted in the film *The Gatekeepers* (Moreh, 2012).

4. On the first intifada, see Lockman & Beinin (1989); Schiff & Ya'ari (1989); Peretz (1990); Hunter (1993); Benvenisti (1995); Mishal & Sela (2000); Ron (2003); Gordon (2008); and Sela (2014).
5. On the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, see Lustick (1997); Barnett (1999); Said (2001); Barak (2005); and Sela (2009, 2014).
6. B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, is an Israeli nongovernmental organization that monitors human rights violations in the Territories.
7. On the second intifada, see Ron (2003); Peri (2006); Levy (2007); Gordon (2008); Grinberg (2010); Ben-Eliezer (2012); and Sela (2014).

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CHAPTER 26

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

AVRAHAM SELA

THE Arab–Zionist conflict over Palestine was from the outset marked by a mutually exclusive claim of national rights over Palestine/Eretz Yisrael and denial by each group of such rights for the other. Justified and substantiated by historical, religious, cultural, and legal tenets, this symmetry determined the nature of this conflict as long, bloody, and resistant to the countless attempts, sponsored mainly by international powers, to bring about a peaceful settlement of the contradictory claims.

The proclamation of the State of Israel in mid-May 1948 followed more than six months of bitter intercommunal war between Arabs and Jews which, due to the Arabs' defeat and mass exodus to neighboring states, dragged four Arab states into military intervention in the crisis. Apart from the loss of their homeland, the primary result of the war for the Palestinians was the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Arabs from their cities and villages who became refugees. At the end of 1947 the total population in Mandatory Palestine was about 1,970,000, a third of whom were Jews. Of the 826,000 Arabs who lived in the area that became the State of Israel by mid-1949, only 160,000 Arabs, mostly rural, remained in Israel, constituting 14 percent of the total population (1,174,000). The number of Palestinian refugees still remains a matter of contention among Israeli, Arab, and United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) estimates. The latter's figures of 715,000–730,000 were largely accepted by Arabs; other estimates—more acceptable to Israel—maintain that the number of refugees was 650,000–700,000 (Abu-Sitta, 2013; Morris, 2004; United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, 1949). The refugees mostly remained within historic Palestine—the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which came under Jordanian and Egyptian rule, respectively—but the rest headed to neighboring Arab countries.

During the war and shortly thereafter, Israel prevented the return of Palestinian refugees into the territory under its control. Nevertheless, between 1948 and 1951 at least twenty thousand Palestinian refugees infiltrated back into Israel and managed to attain citizenship. At the same time, forced depopulation of Arab villages by the Israeli

authorities created a problem of some twenty-five thousand Arab internal refugees, who remained in Israel as citizens with a status of “present absentees” as far as their property was concerned, forbidden to return to their original villages and land, which became state held (Cohen, 2005). Moreover, in a number of cases since the early 1950s, Israeli governments have refused to allow the return of such refugees to their original villages despite verdicts from the High Court of Justice supporting the appeals of such village communities. Nonetheless, within the first three years after the war, Israel absorbed some three thousand Palestinian refugees on humanitarian grounds of family unification (Manna, 2017).

Despite the disastrous results of the 1948 war for Arab Palestinian society and national leadership, within less than two decades Israel came to face a revitalized Palestinian national liberation movement upholding the banner of total armed struggle. This chapter addresses the Palestinian national movement’s growth into a primary strategic challenge for Israel and the latter’s responses to the movement’s changing forms.

YEARS OF DENIAL: THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE, 1948–1967

Between 1948 and the early 1970s Israel perceived the Palestine problem largely as a refugee problem, a residual issue of the 1948 war. Israel’s attitude had been shaped in June 1948 when its government resolved not to allow the return of Arab refugees into the state. This attitude remained unchanged despite international pressures which, beginning with UN Resolution 194 in December 1948, repeatedly affirmed the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. Over the years the “right of return” became the cornerstone of collective Palestinian identity and a major demand by the Arab states in their conflict with Israel (Aruri, 2001).

Faced with Arab accusations of having deliberately expelled the Palestinians during the war, Israel adopted the argument that the Palestinian exodus was voluntary, in response to calls made by Arab states and the Palestinian leadership to leave. Practically, Israel adopted various diplomatic overtures to keep the issue of return at bay, insisting that in view of their hostility to Israel, the Palestinian refugees could not be permitted to return to their original homes but should be resettled in the countries that had absorbed them. Moreover, Israel adhered to the argument that the solution to the refugee problem could only be reached within a final settlement of the Arab–Israeli conflict. In view of the forced migration of Jews from most Arab states in the 1950s, Israel maintained that the war had effectively resulted in a *de facto* exchange of populations and properties (Tovi, 2008).

Although the Declaration of Independence, the founding document of the newly born State of Israel, called for “complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex,” already during the war the Arab

inhabitants were put under strict military rule, which by November 1948 was officially applied throughout the country in the form of a military administration based on the Mandate's Defense Emergency Regulations. Israeli authorities thus maintained a strict regime of control over the Arab minority, especially concerning political activity (see the chapters by Galnoor, Jamal, and Ghanem in this volume).

The second decade after 1948 witnessed substantial political changes among the Palestinian refugees in the Arab countries, with direct implications for Israel. Although the surrounding Arab countries seemed a natural haven for the Palestinian refugees given their common culture and social traditions, fear of domestic backlash against the resettlement of the refugees and indifference to the latter's fate prevented the Arab states—except Jordan—from naturalizing the Palestinian newcomers or—except Syria—providing them permanent residential rights.

The establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in May 1964 under Egyptian and Jordanian sponsorship, along with the beginning of guerrilla warfare against Israel by Fatah in the following year, opened a new chapter in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Riding the wave of decolonization and prevalent struggles for national liberation by Asian and African movements, the founders of the PLO meant it to serve as a political, noncombatant institution that would represent Palestinian national rights. In contrast, the late 1950s and early 1960s witnessed the rise of Palestinian nationalist groups, most conspicuously Fatah, committed to fighting for the liberation of Palestine. Led by young, educated refugees in various Arab states, Fatah challenged the dominant pan-Arab approach in the conflict with Israel represented by Gamal Abd al-Nasser, placing the liberation of Palestine as a priority objective for, even a prerequisite to, Arab unity. The re-emergence of Palestinian nationalism reflected the conviction that the Palestinians must pioneer an armed struggle against Israel in order to entangle the Arab states in war with Israel against their will. The enthusiasm with which Palestinian refugee communities responded to the advent of the PLO was also the outcome of the restrictive policies of the Arab states toward the Palestinian refugees (Shemesh, 1996).

Maintaining that the perpetuation of the refugee problem was a deliberate Arab policy aimed at exploiting this human tragedy as a political and moral weapon in the conflict, Israel perceived the advent of the PLO and the ensuing guerrilla organizations as a repeated version of the Palestinian “self-sacrificers” (*fida'iyyoon*) of the mid-1950s, who had been sponsored by Egypt. Israel thus officially perceived the new guerrilla groups, now defined as “saboteurs” (*mehablim*), as terrorist proxies employed by the Arab states as part of their overall “short of war” strategy against Israel. That the PLO was established and led by refugees upholding the ideas of national liberation and return to the lost homeland further entrenched Israel in its perception. Hence, the most prevalent phrase used for decades by the security agencies in referring to the Palestinian guerrilla groups' practice was “hostile sabotage activity” (*pe'ilut hablanit 'oyenet*, abbreviated PAHA), ignoring the collective national identity of its perpetrators.

As it had in the 1950s, Israel responded by waging military raids on Palestinian and official targets in the countries from which Palestinian attacks were launched, in an effort to force those countries to prevent such activities emanating from their territory.

This policy peaked in November 1966 in the military raid on the West Bank village of Samu' in the Hebron area, in retaliation for the killing of three Israeli soldiers by a mine set by Palestinians in the Israeli territory. The employment of excessive military power in this raid triggered intense public demonstrations by Palestinians throughout the West Bank against the regime and a bitter exchange of recriminations between Jordan and "revolutionary" Egypt and Syria, who supported Palestinian activism without accountability for its results.

In retrospect, the Samu' raid was a milestone in the road to the May–June 1967 Israeli–Arab escalation to war. Although the scope of Palestinian guerrilla attacks against Israel, as well as the number of Israeli lives they claimed, was relatively limited, this activity entangled both Israel and the Arab states in a war they wanted to avoid. Indeed, other factors were at work in the three years that preceded the 1967 war, especially the decline of Nasser's Arab posture and bitter inter-Arab conflicts in which Arab rulers often resorted to the Palestinian cause in their self-legitimizing rhetoric, which as of the mid-1960s focused increasingly on supporting the PLO and guerrilla activities against Israel.

BETWEEN POLITICAL DENIAL AND MILITARY REPRESSION, 1967–1987

Israel's conquest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 was the most significant turning point in the development of the Palestinians as a nation under the banner of the PLO, with far-reaching implications for Israeli perceptions and practices. Opening the "Green Lines" among Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip to free movement for the first time since the dissection of historic Palestine by Israel, Jordan, and Egypt in 1948 allowed renewed social and political interactions among their populations that were to deepen mutual sentiments of solidarity and common national identity. The 1967 war in fact reunited the majority of Palestinians under one roof, albeit without erasing the differences among them in terms of social conditions, legal status, and administration.

The immediate aftermath of the 1967 War witnessed a rapid expansion of and popular support for the Palestinian cause in Arab countries (see the chapter by Rabinovich in this volume). The Arab states' defeat boosted the concept of "popular armed struggle" and accounted for the amalgamation of the pre-1967 PLO with the guerrilla groups dominated by Fatah. By mid-1968, headed by Yasser Arafat, Fatah took over and reshaped the PLO as a distinct national center committed to armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine. Following Fatah's failure to organize the West Bank Palestinians for classical guerrilla warfare against Israel following the Algerian model, the guerrilla groups moved to the East Bank of Jordan and Lebanon, turning them into territorial bases for command, training, and organization, and as a springboard for conducting raids, launching rockets, or shelling Israeli targets across the borders. However, the

buildup of an armed Palestinian presence in Jordan and Lebanon using their territories for launching attacks against Israel, and the latter's retaliation in response, soon brought about a head-on collision between the Palestinian guerrilla organizations and the "hosting" states.

By late 1971 all armed Palestinians were forced out of Jordan following the latter's military offensives, which began in "Black September" 1970. In contrast, repeated offensives of the Lebanese army against the Palestinian guerrillas beginning in 1968 failed to eliminate or control their military activities, primarily due to Lebanon's weakness as a state and the intervention of Arab states in favor of the Palestinians. Even without Israel's retaliatory policy, Palestinian military activities in Arab states adjacent to Israel was problematic and soon backfired. There were repeated tensions and military clashes in Lebanon (especially in 1969 and 1973), Jordan (1970–1971), and Syria (1976 and 1983) (Sela, 1998).

While denying the authenticity of Palestinian nationalism, Israel's repeated military retaliation against Palestinian and official targets in the hosting Arab states played into the hands of the Palestinian guerrilla groups by boosting international publicity about and attention to the Palestinian cause. This was especially the case with Palestinian international terrorism in the early 1970s, which peaked in the assassination of eleven Israeli sportsmen at the Munich Olympics in September 1972 and Israel's response, a series of assassinations of PLO leaders in Europe and Lebanon. By the mid-1970s most Palestinian groups ceased perpetrating attacks on Israeli targets overseas out of sheer cost-benefit calculation. Nonetheless, the growing international support for the Palestinian cause and its entanglement in the Lebanese civil war as of 1975 paved the road to Israel's Lebanon War (1982), aimed primarily at eliminating the PLO both militarily and politically.

Israel's failure to stem the tide of international empathy for the Palestinian cause, especially among developing nations in Asia and Africa, was salient in the aftermath of the 1973 war thanks to the collective diplomatic efforts of the Arab states to attain international recognition for the PLO and ensure its inclusion in the Arab-Israeli diplomatic process. This effort culminated in the October 1974 resolution of the Arab summit in Rabat recognizing the PLO as "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," Arafat's speech before the UN General Assembly a few weeks later, and the latter's Resolution 3236, which affirmed "the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people" to self-determination and national independence. Conversely, Israel's international standing continued to deteriorate, reaching its lowest ebb in the November 1975 UN General Assembly resolution that determined "Zionism is a form of racism," in contrast to the international expanding recognition of the PLO (Kleiman, 1990).

The PLO itself contributed to the growing legitimacy it had scored in the international arena by a gradual process of retreating from its ideological commitment to liberate the whole territory of historic Palestine, adopting a pragmatic national objective. Beginning with the resolution of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) in June 1974 to establish an "independent combatant national authority . . . over every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated," by the late 1970s the PLO had openly confined its national

objectives to the realization of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and establishing its independent state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem (Sela, 2014).

In spite of the PLO's demonstrated pragmatism—tacitly abandoning its claim to eliminate Israel—and soaring international recognition, by the mid-1970s the PLO's image among the Israeli public had undergone a process of demonization and dehumanization. In amplifying the PLO's threatening image and the government's imperative to wage a total war against it, Israeli officials portrayed the PLO in the ugliest and most evil terms, analogizing its behavior to “Nazi methods” and describing Arafat as “a double-legged animal” (Barnea, 2002).

Officially, Israel's main argument against international recognition of the PLO was the latter's political commitment to the annihilation of Israel, its terrorist activities, and its rejection of UN Resolution 242. These three elements became agreed-upon prerequisites in the secret pledge made by the US government to Israel as part of the Israel–Egypt interim agreement in Sinai, signed on September 4, 1975. According to this pledge, the United States undertook not to recognize or maintain contacts with the PLO until it recognized Israel's right to exist, accepted Resolutions 242 and 338, and renounced terrorism.

Nonetheless, as the PLO began shifting its strategy after 1974 toward establishing an independent state in the occupied territories (OT), the road became open for Israeli leftist activists to meet with PLO officials in Europe. Although contacts between unofficial Israelis and PLO officials continued well after the Likud Party came to power in 1977, they attracted much criticism in Israel's political system. In 1986 the Knesset approved an amendment to the law against terrorism banning unauthorized meetings with PLO members, though Labor and leftist activists found ways to circumvent the law and continued meeting with Palestinian officials.

The onset of civil war in Lebanon in 1975, in which the Palestinian guerrilla groups became directly involved, further focused Israel's attention and military operations on the Lebanese arena, the bastion of the PLO's political and military units. In March 1978, following a Fatah raid from the sea and hijacking of an Israeli tour bus that resulted in thirty-two Israeli losses, Israeli forces occupied south Lebanon up to the Litani River and drove the Palestinian guerrilla forces further north. Israel withdrew from this area three months later following a UN Security Council resolution on deploying an international force (UNIFIL) in south Lebanon, assigned to prevent a Palestinian military presence in this area. In July 1981 the south Lebanese front flared up again between Israel and the Palestinian military buildup, culminating in Israeli air bombing of PLO headquarters in Beirut, which sparked mounting criticism from the US White House and Congress. Thanks to US mediation between Israel and—indirectly—the PLO, the parties agreed to a tacit ceasefire, which constituted another milestone in the PLO's struggle for international recognition.

For Jerusalem, the July 1981 ceasefire was a disturbing development because of the undecided nature in which this military round had ended and its interpretation as another step of the PLO toward international recognition. At the same time, Israel was preparing for a comprehensive military offensive against the Palestinian military buildup in Lebanon in close collaboration with the Lebanese Forces (LF), an allied

Maronite militia. While it still remains unclear to what extent was the government deceitfully—or willingly—dragged to expand the forty-kilometer-deep operation to a full scope of war by Defense Minister Sharon, it soon became clear that the latter's objectives were far more ambitious than initially approved. Beyond the immediate goals of destroying the Palestinian military presence in south Lebanon and driving the Syrians out of that country, Israel's Lebanon war was reportedly aiming at a grand strategy that included the elimination of the PLO as a political actor, forging an allied Lebanese government led by the LF, and driving the Palestinian refugees out of Lebanon (Sela, 1998). Having a peace treaty with Egypt, and with Iraq being immersed in bitter war with Iran, Menachem Begin's second government, with Ariel Sharon as defense minister, was tempted to seize the opportunity of perceived political and military freedom of maneuver on both regional and international levels for the realization of its strategic goals on the northern front.

Israel's invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 indeed resulted, following three months of war, in forcing the PLO leaders and military forces out of Lebanon, eliminating the PLO's last territorial base and military option. At the same time, a nine-week-long siege of Beirut, with its attendant aerial bombings and blocking of essential goods from reaching the civilian population, seriously eroded Israel's international reputation and underlined the gravity of the Palestinian problem and the need to resolve it. On September 1, a few days after the PLO leadership and forces evacuated Beirut in accordance with Israel's demand, US president Ronald Reagan announced an outline for a settlement of the Palestinian conflict, which came as a huge surprise to Jerusalem. Domestically, the Lebanon war, especially in the wake of the massacre perpetrated by the LF in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in West Beirut, triggered unprecedented public protest questioning the war's necessity and brutal conduct by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). For the first time, the war Israel had just waged became tagged as "war by choice" (Yariv, 1985).

On the regional level, the PLO's forced evacuation of Beirut and the Reagan initiative led to approval by the Arab summit conference in Fez, held in September 1982, of an unprecedented Arab-Israeli peace plan focusing on the Palestinian cause. Besides reiterating the demand for full Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders, the Arab peace plan reaffirmed the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, the establishment of its independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital under the PLO's leadership, and the materialization of the right of return of the Palestinian refugees (Sela, 1998).

The Israeli-PLO Competition over the Occupied Territories

Israel's post-1967 policy concerning the newly "liberated," "held," or "administered" West Bank and Gaza Strip reflected uncertainty, ambivalence, and the absence of a clear and agreed-upon vision or plan about what to do with these territories and their populations, other than keeping them under Israel's military control and constructing Jewish settlements on these lands. As much as Israeli decision makers wished to possess these territories, they could overlook neither the demographic consequences of annexation of

the West Bank and Gaza strip for Israel's Jewish nature nor the expected negative responses of the international community to such a unilateral decision (see the chapter by Barak in this volume).

Israel's seemingly "normalized" control of the OT and continued construction of Jewish settlements there, coupled with King Hussein's efforts to preserve his status as the primary claimant to the West Bank after the expulsion of the Palestinian guerrilla groups from his kingdom, made it necessary for the PLO to establish its authority over the OT's residents by both coercion and mobilization. The post-1973 war years witnessed the emergence of grass-roots civil society institutions, including social (students, women, welfare) and professional associations, sponsored and financially supported by Fatah and other PLO member organizations. This activity intended to strengthen the PLO in its competition with Jordan over representation of these territories by fostering allegiance and preparing their residents to conduct civil protest and disobedience against Israel's military administration.

The PLO's stature in the OT soared in the late 1970s following the rise of a new radical leadership in the form of mayors elected in 1976 in major West Bank cities who were identified with various PLO factions. The establishment of the National Guidance Committee (NGC) by these leaders resulted in increased civil disobedience and protest, which peaked in the spring of 1982 when Israel expelled its leading figures and outlawed the NGC. The NGC also meant to defy the Israeli-backed Villages' Leagues, established by the military administration in the West Bank in 1978, ostensibly as an alternative to the nationalist, PLO-oriented West Bank leadership. Similarly, the Israeli military government in the Gaza Strip enabled the uninterrupted development of the Muslim Brotherhood movement due to its noncombatant nature and its focus on social and religious activities, assuming it could be a counterbalance to the PLO's secular nationalist organizations (Tessler, 1994).

Israel's countermeasures against the PLO's political infrastructure in the OT notwithstanding, by the mid-1980s PLO-based social networks and associations had reached fruition precisely at a time when the PLO had not yet recovered from its forced expulsion from Lebanon. At this point the PLO's loyal networks in the OT represented the only political asset left for the PLO to ensure its relevance in the struggle over the OT. Nonetheless, the eruption in December 1987 of the Palestinian uprising (intifada) was essentially spontaneous, initiated and nurtured by social and political forces in the territories, including a new actor in the Palestinian arena, the Islamic Resistance Movement (harakat al-muqawama al-Filastiniyya—Hamas).

THE PALESTINIAN UPRISING AND THE ROAD TO OSLO, 1987–1993

In view of the psychological and historical residues of mutual hostility and denial between Israel and the Palestinians, what made the historic breakthrough of the 1993

Oslo Accords possible? A number of factors and events accounted for this groundbreaking development in Israeli–Palestinian relations, most of which derived from the 1987–1993 Palestinian uprising (intifada) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which triggered a chain reaction: King Hussein’s legal disengagement from the West Bank, the Palestinian declaration of independence in November 1988, and Israel’s peace initiative of May 1989. Still, all these events together would have been insufficient without the end of the Cold War and the consequences of the First Gulf War (1990–1991).

The eruption in December 1987 of a popular uprising in the territories caught both the PLO and Israeli authorities by surprise, triggering unprecedented reverberations throughout the world and at once bringing the Palestinian issue back to the center stage of Middle East politics. The ongoing protest, demonstrations, and disobedience activities clearly put an end to the status quo of the past two decades, motivating the US government to resume its diplomatic efforts to stem the uprising and settle the conflict. Within less than a year from its eruption the uprising clearly signaled the Palestinization of the Arab–Israeli conflict, that is, the return to primacy of the pre-1948 Arab–Jewish dispute. Nonetheless, it took a few years of mass protest and violence, and the cataclysmic Gulf War, to force Israel and the PLO to recognize their deadlocked strategies and move to direct negotiations on an agreed-upon outlet.

In June 1988 the Arab summit meeting held in Algiers reasserted its support for the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and allocated a substantial amount of financial aid for the territories’ residents, to be channeled through the PLO. For Jordan, the detrimental impact of the summit’s decisions on its standing regarding the territories, coupled with the unequivocal identification of the intifada’s secular leadership with the PLO and concerns lest the intifada might spill over into the East Bank, all accounted for King Hussein’s unexpected declaration on July 31 of a final legal and administrative disengagement from the West Bank. Regardless of his true intentions, Hussein’s move was made irreversible by the PLO’s declaration in its 19th PNC session, held in Algiers in November, based on the UN partition resolution of November 29, 1947, and its consequent worldwide recognition, including by Jordan. Arafat’s public acceptance of Resolutions 242 and 338 and renunciation of terrorism shortly afterward finally met the US prerequisites for opening a diplomatic dialogue with the PLO.

Israel’s response to the intifada during its first year reflected misconceptions concerning the social and political driving forces behind the popular uprising, ascribing it primarily to the PLO’s leadership in Tunis (see the chapter by Barak in this volume). Politically, the intifada was a watershed in the Labor Party’s position on the OT, reflected in a clear shift from the “Jordanian option” to the “Palestinian option,” albeit without the PLO. The American–PLO dialogue, another political result of the intifada, implied that as far as the US government was concerned, there was no way to advance the peace process without the PLO, an assumption that was utterly unacceptable to Israel’s Zionist leadership across the political spectrum. Israel’s national coalition government, however, could not ignore the momentous political process generated by the intifada. In May 1989, under pressure from the Labor Party for policy change, the government as a whole adopted a “peace initiative.” The Israeli plan called for negotiations with elected

Palestinian representatives from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, on the basis of the autonomy plan that Israel and Egypt had agreed upon as part of the Camp David accords in 1978 (Rubinstein, 1989).

As far as Israel was concerned, however, the autonomy was meant to be negotiated and implemented with no involvement of the Palestinians in the diaspora, and definitely without the PLO. Nevertheless, Israel's peace initiative indicated acceptance, for the first time in the Zionist and state history, of the Palestinians, rather than Jordan or any Arab neighboring state, as the main partner in a peaceful settlement. The initiative apparently meant to preserve the national coalition government and drive a wedge between the PLO, the broadly recognized legitimate representative of the Palestinian diaspora, and the West Bank and Gaza residents. But given the latter's unshakable adherence to the PLO as their only legitimate representative, the Israeli initiative remained without Palestinian partners.

With no tangible breakthroughs in the peace process and confronted with a growing tide of deadlocked opportunities, the PLO was quickly losing the diplomatic momentum experienced during 1988. Moreover, the continued uprising allowed Hamas to expand its ranks and military operations against Israel, constructing a distinctive political movement that refused to join the PLO and publicly challenged its status as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. As of early 1990, the PLO's political achievements shrank dramatically, and the deadlocked dialogue with the United States was suspended in the summer when Arafat refused to denounce an attack from the sea perpetrated by a small PLO member faction on Israel's beach. With the diplomatic option deadlocked, its financial requests from the oil-rich states ignored, and acerbic relations with Egypt and Syria, the PLO's choices narrowed to allying with Saddam Hussein throughout the latter's invasion of Kuwait and the Gulf War, a policy that turned out to be disastrous for the PLO and the Palestinians in the Gulf. In addition to the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, mostly from Kuwait, the Gulf monarchies punished the PLO by cutting off their financial support, contrary to their policy toward Hamas (Piscatori, 1991).

The end of the Gulf War in 1991 witnessed a vigorous effort by the US administration to resume the Middle East peace process, culminating in convening an international peace conference in Madrid in October 1991 under joint US–Soviet chairmanship. Under US pressure, Israel reluctantly agreed to take part in this multilateral peace conference, after its prerequisites concerning Palestinian participation in the conference were accepted: no representation of the Palestinians by a separate delegation, and no participation by the PLO, Jerusalemites, or expelled figures. In addition, Israel refused to freeze the settlements in the OT before the Madrid conference, and the negotiations were to deal with Palestinian self-government only.

Denied of its bargaining power and under pressure exerted by the “inside” Palestinian leadership, as well as by Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the PLO had no choice but to accept Israel's conditions and temporarily shelve its prerequisite concerning its exclusive representation of the Palestinian people. Although Israel initially agreed to negotiate only with a joint Jordanian–Palestinian delegation, in the course of the conference the Israeli delegation gradually moved to dealing informally with the Palestinian delegation on a

separate bilateral level. In essence, however, the Israeli–Palestinian talks remained unproductive well after a Labor-led government headed by Yitzhak Rabin came into office in June 1992. Indeed, Rabin repeatedly blamed the PLO for the stalemate, indicating his recognition of the PLO’s dominant position in the negotiations.

The prolonged impasse of the official Israeli–Palestinian track, combined with the growing armed operations of Hamas, formed the backdrop of the secret talks that started in early 1993 between Israeli academics, unofficially backed by Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin, and PLO officials in Oslo, under Norwegian auspices. It is noteworthy that these talks began shortly after the Rabin government abolished, in January 1993, the ban on meetings between Israelis and PLO officials. Threatened by a government–coalition crisis created by the secession of the Sephardic Ultra-Orthodox Party (Shas) and the loss of the Arab Knesset members’ support due to the prolonged stalemate, in May Rabin gave his consent to turning the Oslo secret channel into full-fledged official negotiations between Israel and the PLO. Prime Minister Rabin’s pragmatic approach to the PLO was essential in his decision to cross the Rubicon, allowing official negotiations with and later mutual recognition of the organization, once he became convinced of the PLO’s acceptance of an interim agreement on Palestinian self-government. In essence, the recognition of the PLO became possible once it ceased to represent the PLO’s primary tenets that threatened Israel’s legitimate existence. Obviously the PLO could not allow an agreement to be made between Israel and the Palestinian delegates of the OT, which could ultimately endanger its position and future survival.

The direct Israel–PLO negotiations led to the historical mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO and the Declaration of Principles (DOP), signed on September 13, 1993, on the White House lawn with a handshake by Rabin and Arafat. The DOP shaped a prospective process of establishing a five-year interim Palestinian self-governing authority, first in the Gaza Strip and the Jordan Valley’s town of Jericho, to be expanded later to other parts of the West Bank in two more phases, as well as the election of a Palestinian council. The PLO undertook to omit from the Palestinian National Charter all the statements denying Israel’s legitimacy or calling for war against it. The core issues of the conflict—final borders of the self-governed territory, Jerusalem, the Palestinian refugees, Jewish settlements, and water resources, which were deferred to the permanent status negotiations—were left open without being prejudged by the interim arrangements. The implementation of the first stage of the DOP in May 1994 set in motion a state-building process led by Arafat’s Fatah organization, with generous financial support from Western donors and Japan (Rabinovich, 2004).

THE FAILED OSLO PROCESS AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS, 1993–2005

The Oslo Accords resulted from the pressing need of the parties’ leaders for an outlet from a political impasse rather than a shared vision on how to approach the root causes

of their century-long conflict. Worse still, their political constituencies were deeply divided, both ideologically and politically over nearly every aspect of future Israeli–Palestinian relations. With the benefit of hindsight, the collapse of the Oslo process in late 2000 and the long diplomatic stalemate that has prevailed ever since, it is clear that neither party was politically ripe for a comprehensive settlement of the conflict. Indeed, despite the broad Israeli, Palestinian, and international consensus over a two-state solution based largely on the “Green Line” of 1967, the parties have been reluctant or unable to translate the DOP into a joint action toward an agreed-upon permanent settlement.

The Oslo process was essentially tainted by uncertainty about the prospects of reaching the final status phase. Israeli critics maintained that the Oslo process risked using up Israel’s bargaining chips without securing Palestinian consent on the permanent settlement matters. Indeed, whereas the Palestinian establishment constantly defined its final objective as an independent Palestinian state along the 1967 borders of the OT, with East Jerusalem as its capital, until the Camp David summit of 2000 the governments of Rabin, Shimon Peres, and Benjamin Netanyahu deliberately avoided mentioning the term “Palestinian state.” In the following years it became clear that most Israelis were unprepared to accept the Palestinians’ minimum claims for full sovereignty and statehood, let alone their claims to the Temple Mount (*al-haram al-sharif*) and the right of return of Palestinian refugees into Israel. Indeed, the Israeli public had been neither prepared for an agreement with a hitherto sworn enemy nor informed about the real meaning of the Oslo Accords, which entailed the relinquishment of established concepts of security and national-religious symbols.

Regardless of ideological differences, Israeli governments ascribed primary importance to security considerations over peace, measuring the cost–benefit of the Oslo process mainly by the level of Palestinian violence against Jews. Thus, implementation of the accords was markedly shaped by Israel’s paramount power and continued control over the whole territory under negotiation. This unequal relationship allowed Israel to decide the scope of powers allowed to the Palestinian Authority (PA) at any given time and in any space, as well as the pace and contents of the process, even after the US administration assumed the role of a peace broker between the two parties in late 1996.

For the Palestinians, Israel’s power-oriented, unilateral approach was particularly unacceptable on two sensitive matters. The first matter was the continued expansion of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, in which the PLO sought to establish its yearned-for, independent state. Second, although it released 4,500 Palestinian prisoners following the Cairo agreement in May 1994—and another 1,880 until January 1996—Israel refused to release hundreds of prisoners who murdered Israelis. In any case, Israel dealt with the release of Palestinian security prisoners as an issue subordinated to cost-benefit calculations, especially in the context of domestic politics.

Notwithstanding the significance of their mutual recognition, whatever Israel and the PLO attained from the DOP of September 1993, through the Paris Economic Protocol (1994); the Cairo (1994), Oslo II (Taba, 1995), and Hebron (1997) accords; and the Wye Memorandum (1998), was instrumental in nature and practically confined to technical

“division of labor” arrangements for administering the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. All the agreements until 1998 represented the preeminence of Israeli national security considerations, which dictated severe restrictions on the scope of freedoms and powers allowed to the PA and the population under its jurisdiction.

Israel’s conduct toward its Palestinian partner was primarily shaped by the growing anger of the Jewish public caused by the Islamists’ terrorist attacks against civilians and frustrated expectations for effective prevention of such attacks by the PA in accordance with the latter’s commitment. Though a number of suicide bombings within Israel were perpetrated by the Palestinian Islamist groups during the first two years of the Oslo process, it was the massive wave of suicide bombings in February–March 1996 that made the Israeli public mistrustful of and apprehensive about the “true” intentions and objectives of the Palestinian leadership. The occurrence of these suicide bombings three months before the general elections in Israel had an unmistakable impact on the increasingly concerned Jewish electorate, who sought security in the right-wing candidate for premiership, Netanyahu, a devout opponent of the Oslo Accords.

In retrospect, the Oslo II Accord of September 1995, by which the PA received direct rule over all Palestinian cities and towns, marked the peak of the Oslo process and the beginning of its deterioration. The Oslo II Accord effectively dissected the West Bank into separate enclaves under different civil and security arrangements and placed restrictions on the movement of people and goods among these enclaves, in addition to previously imposed restrictions on movement between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Though Israel still maintained full control over two-thirds of the West Bank territory, the new accord alarmed the zealous Jewish opponents of the Oslo process and spurred them to take decisive action to put an end to it.

The new agreement collided head-on with core nationalist and religious beliefs of the Israeli right wing, risking not only the surrender of the West Bank—the cradle of biblical Israeli nationhood—but also the division of Eretz Yisrael. The Labor government was attacked as “non-Jewish” and blamed for collaborating with Arafat and arming his security apparatuses, partitioning Jerusalem, compromising Israel’s control over the Temple Mount, and freezing the construction of or removing unauthorized settlements. The failure of the PA to tame the Islamic opposition on behalf of Israel was effectively manipulated by the right-wing discourse, which played on sensitive cords of Jewish historical images of persecution and victimhood and hammered on the codes of ethno-religious Jewish—as opposed to Israeli—identity and commitment to the “complete” Land of Israel—as opposed to the State of Israel (see the chapter by Pedahzur & Perliger in this volume).

The assassination of Rabin in November 1995 and replacement of the Labor government by the Likud six months later dealt a severe blow to the Oslo process which, due to its transitional nature, enabled opponents on both sides to undermine it. This is especially the case of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, whose violence resulted in increasing Israeli mistrust and despair of the Palestinians as reliable partners. Indeed, Israel’s policies before Ehud Barak’s term as prime minister (1999–2001) represented a narrowly defined vision of a limited Palestinian autonomy while preserving Israel’s overall control of the

West Bank and Gaza Strip, keeping Jerusalem unified, and denying any symbol of Palestinian statehood. By the time Barak came along with his “all-or-nothing” approach of conflict resolution, no visible effort was being made to prepare the Israeli public for its implications, and the Palestinians, meanwhile, had lost faith in Israel’s willingness to either sign a fair agreement or implement what it had signed.

The negotiations for a final settlement initiated by Barak failed to bring the parties closer to an agreement on any of the core issues. The Sharm al-Sheikh Memorandum of September 1999 mainly set the timetable for negotiations toward reaching a framework agreement on a permanent status by February 2000 and a comprehensive agreement on a permanent status within a year from the resumption of the talks on permanent status. In practice, neither of the latter stages ever accomplished its objectives. The Camp David summit (2000), the Taba negotiations (2001), the US Road Map initiative (2003), and the Annapolis summit (2007) and consequent Olmert–Abbas secret negotiations—reportedly arriving closer than ever before to an agreement—all confirmed the unbridgeable gaps between the two parties, especially concerning the Palestinian refugees.

The Camp David summit, like all later rounds of Israeli–Palestinian negotiations, underlined the two main bones of contention between the parties: the PLO’s claim to the “right of return” of the Palestinian refugees and its refusal to recognize any Jewish attachment to, let alone rights over, the Temple Mount compound, neither of which Israeli policymakers could accept. Moreover, the Palestinian negotiators insisted that Israel must accept full and exclusive responsibility for creating the refugee problem and thus also for its resolution, which Israeli leaders utterly rejected (Ross, 2004; Zanyan, 2015). For the decisive majority of Israeli Jews a massive return of the Palestinian refugees is tantamount to a total loss of the Jewish state, hence the insistence on accepting only a few thousand Palestinian returnees into Israel as a symbolic humanitarian gesture. Though much less Jewish consensus exists on the necessity of shared sovereignty over the Temple Mount, the very denial of Jewish attachment to this place served as another justification for Barak’s claim following the Camp David summit that Arafat was “no partner” for peace.

Even in the Sharm al-Sheikh Memorandum, Israel had not given its consent to Palestinian statehood or expressed willingness to apply the principle of “land for peace” to the Israeli–Palestinian case (applied in the Israel–Egypt peace treaty). The extent to which Israeli policymakers knew where they were heading was clearly indicated by the lack of “red lines” concerning borders. Israeli negotiators began by suggesting 65 percent of the West Bank, then inched up to 91 percent (plus 1 percent swap) at the Camp David summit (July 2000) and 94–95 percent by the Clinton parameters (December 2000), none of which met the Palestinians’ consistent claim for no less than 100 percent of the West Bank territory (with minimal land swap).

The eruption of the al-Aqsa intifada in late September 2000, accompanied by riots of Israeli Arab citizens throughout the country, ostensibly vindicated the right-wing discourse against the Oslo process and led to the electoral victory of Ariel Sharon, a former general and defense minister, as prime minister. The unprecedented frequency and scope of the casualties caused by Palestinian suicide bombings in Israeli cities accounted

for interpreting the new uprising as another phase in a preplanned program of the PLO's war against the very existence of the Jewish state. Furthermore, the al-Aqsa intifada atrocities turned the majority of Israelis, including segments of the center-left, against the Oslo process, blaming Arafat for the failure of the Camp David summit and the indiscriminate terrorism against Israeli civilians now joined by Fatah, his organization.

The scope of violence adopted by Palestinians and Israelis in the al-Aqsa intifada was unprecedented in the history of their conflict, primarily in terms of human losses. Compared to the total of 47 Israeli and 1,090 Palestinian fatalities in the first intifada (December 1987–September 1993), in the first four years of the al-Aqsa intifada (October 2000–August 2004) the Palestinians carried out more than 20,000 attacks of various types, in which more than 1,000 Israelis were killed, 70 percent of whom were civilians, and more than 5,600 were wounded. During the same period there were 2,124 Palestinian fatalities, according to Israel's Domestic Security Service (2,736 according to Palestinian sources). More than 500 Israelis were killed in suicide bombings, mostly civilians within the "Green Line." The year 2002 saw a record high of sixty suicide bombings. From the beginning of the al-Aqsa intifada in late September 2000 to the end of March 2002, 556 Israeli civilians were killed. The terrorist attacks had a far-reaching impact on the civilians exposed to it, directly or indirectly, in terms of high levels of post-traumatic anxiety and depression; they experienced the terrorist attacks as an existential anxiety (Sela, 2014).

The massive Palestinian violence shifted the center of gravity of Israeli decision-making to the military echelons, whose perceptions and means now dictated the parameters of the actual confrontation. Especially during the first year of the al-Aqsa intifada, the IDF operated, at times in contradiction to the directives of the government, with excessive force, aiming to "decide the confrontation" and triggering a strong sense of vengeance among the Palestinians, which in turn further escalated the hostilities. Despite the asymmetry of power relations with the Palestinians, the latter's suicide bombings instilled in Jewish society a deep sense of personal insecurity. Hence, most Israelis perceived Operation Defense Shield (April 2002) as an inevitable act of defense against an unprecedentedly brutal wave of terror, whereas world opinion by and large perceived Israel as an invader in a sovereign Palestinian territory and the operation as a vehement overthrowing of the Oslo process.

Israel's Defense Shield reduced the scope of Palestinian terrorist attacks from the West Bank, but the horrors of the al-Aqsa intifada forced Sharon's government to adopt a series of unprecedented unilateral security measures. First was the decision to build a "separation wall" between Israel and the West Bank (the Gaza Strip had already been surrounded by a security fence), mostly along the "Green Line," as part of the efforts to prevent terrorist attacks within Israel's territory. Second, in December 2003 Prime Minister Sharon publicly announced his plan for "disengagement" from the Gaza Strip, where the IDF soldiers and Jewish settlers had been under increased attacks by the Islamist groups. Sharon's plan corresponded with President G. W. Bush's "Road Map" of June 2003, by which Israelis and Palestinians were to move over three years toward a permanent two-state solution, although it failed to take off from the ground.

Despite his party's objections, Sharon ruthlessly advanced his plan; counting on the support of most of the Israeli public for disengagement from the Gaza Strip, he seceded from the Likud and established a new party, Kadima. Having won a majority vote by the Knesset in support of the disengagement, the plan was fully implemented in August 2005, evacuating all eighty-six hundred Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip and four settlements in northern Samaria. The unilateral disengagement from Gaza entailed a long and bitter public struggle against its implementation led by the National-Religious Party and secular right-wingers, who framed the uprooting of Jewish settlers as "non-Jewish" and carried in their demonstrations symbols reminiscent of the Nazi persecution of Jews, such as the yellow Star of David.

The traumatic imprint of the disengagement on Israeli-Jewish society was further aggravated by the government's failure to properly address the evacuees' needs for alternative housing and financial compensation, turning the situation into a warning lesson against future decisions about evacuating Jewish settlements. This lesson was taken even further by Hamas's military takeover of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, which turned this area into a platform for frequent rocketing and shelling of Israel's territory and forced the latter to wage major offensives (in 2008, 2012, and 2014) against Hamas and other militants in the Gaza Strip in an effort to restore calm to their mutual border.

THE POLITICS OF STALEMATE: IS THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION OVER?

The election of Barack Obama as president of the United States in 2008 injected new energy into the stalemated peace process between Israel and the Palestinians resulting in two major diplomatic efforts to resume Israeli-Palestinian permanent status negotiations (2009-2010 and 2012-2013), both of which ended in deadlock. Shortly after beginning his second term as prime minister (2009-2013), Netanyahu publicly announced his acceptance of the principle of "two states for two peoples," a novelty in the Likud governments' history. Yet although Netanyahu offered a nine-month freeze on settlement construction in the West Bank (but not in East Jerusalem), his statement included a number of conditions: the Palestinian state must be unarmed, Jerusalem will remain unified, there will be no return of Palestinian refugees to Israel, and the Palestinians must recognize Israel as a Jewish state. The Palestinian leaders rejected these conditions and demanded, following Obama's public stance, a full freeze on Jewish settlements across the 1967 borders. They also refused to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, primarily because such recognition would legitimize Israel's discrimination against its Arab citizens and denial of their collective rights as a national minority.

A major obstacle in resuming Israeli-Palestinian negotiations was the deepening split between the West Bank-based PA and the Hamas-governed Gaza Strip since 2007,

which seriously affected President Mahmoud Abbas's legitimate representation of the Palestinians. Apart from the parties' repeated failures to resolve their differences, Israel further complicated the quest to establish a unified Palestinian government by announcing that it would boycott any such government unless Hamas recognized Israel and its past accords with the PLO, renounced terrorism, and disarmed.

The continued stalemate in the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, ongoing construction of Jewish residential units in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the shift of Israel's political system to the right all contributed to a growing despair about the two-state solution, especially among the Palestinians. This gave rise to reconsideration of alternative solutions such as the binational or one-state solution—"a state of all its citizens," desired by Israeli Arabs, or "one state of two peoples," supported by some Israeli Jews—essentially envisioning equal citizenship and mutual acknowledgment of the national rights of Jews and Palestinians, respectively. While these alternatives have been suggested and discussed mainly by Palestinians, they have also entered the Israeli public discourse, though the vast majority of Israelis perceive them as a sure recipe for future civil war or tantamount to a call for eliminating the State of Israel as a *Jewish* state (Hilal, 2007; Morris, 2009).

The prolonged stalemate of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process parallel to the continued growth of Jewish settler population in the West Bank reiterates Israel's demographic predicament: to maintain its identity as a Jewish and democratic state, Israel must disengage from the Palestinian-occupied territories, preferably through a negotiated agreement. Alternatively, the prolonged occupation and settlement of the West Bank by Jews renders the two-state option increasingly unrealistic, which might eventually lead to an "Apartheid State"/"South African-style struggle" or force Israel to accept full naturalization of the Palestinian residents and lose its Jewish identity.

The Jewish–Arab demographic balance has been a crucial consideration for Israel's policymakers since its very birth as a state. It became a primary issue in the public discourse beginning in the 1980s due to the rapid natural population growth of the Palestinians. This factor was apparently sufficient to mobilize most Israelis to support total disengagement from the Gaza Strip in August 2005, including the uprooting of the Jewish settlements—unprecedented in Israel's history since 1967. Slashing 1.4 million Palestinians from the demographic equation by the disengagement from the Gaza Strip has ostensibly reduced the acuteness of this problem and its impact on policymaking regarding the West Bank. But this is largely a self-deceiving perception, given the Gaza Strip's geographical proximity and the shared identity of its inhabitants with other Palestinians.

Indeed, since the disengagement from the Gaza Strip, right-wing institutes and commentators have been waging a campaign aimed at proving that the demographic balance tips in favor of the Jewish side, mainly due to decreasing fertility and growing emigration among the Palestinians and, at the same time, increasing fertility of the Jewish population (Zimmerman, Seid, & Wise, 2005). In recent years radical religious Zionists have offered their own interpretations and solutions to the demographic problem, based on biblical traditions: given that Eretz Yisrael was exclusively promised to the

Jewish people, non-Jewish residents willing to accept the status of tolerated foreigners in the Jewish state could stay, whereas others would have to migrate or, if they resist, risk annihilation.

The advent of the Trump administration heralded a vehement breaking with established international taboos regarding Israel's policies in the occupied territories, especially regarding the status of the Jewish settlements built there and the unified Jerusalem.

The series of decisions made by the Trump administration began with recognizing unified Jerusalem as Israel's capital followed by a ceremonial inauguration of the US embassy in Jerusalem in mid-May 2018. Next came the recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights and defining the Israeli settlements in the West Bank as "not inconsistent with the international law." In between, Washington took to end all its funding to UNRWA (nearly 30 percent of its budget in 2017) and cut other financial aid to the PA, all of which led the latter to cut off all avenues of dialogue with the US administration, culminating in Trump's long-awaited "Deal of the Century." Though presented as a "realistic two-state solution," Trump's business-like plan for the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict was not only composed and presented in total absence of the Palestinian party, but also its premises, narrative, and vision are in perfect congruence with Israel's nationalist right thought and practice.

It thus came as no surprise that most of the center-right political factions—constituting the majority of Knesset members—applauded the plan. While the Likud and ideological Right responded with unhidden elation, responses by hard-core national-religious figures, however, could by no means accept the envisioned Palestinian state, even under the humiliating conditions set by the plan for its realization. On the other hand, the Palestinian leadership totally rejected the plan, attaining quite reserved support of most Arab states.

CONCLUSION

Israel's theory and practice in the conflict with the Palestinians since the beginning of the Zionist enterprise reveal more continuity than change. Regardless of their varied formulation and implementation, both essentially reflect Israel's constant strive for securing Jewish territorial sovereignty and commitment to the needs of all Jews regardless of the Palestinians' collective rights. From the outset, the conflict assumed a "zero-sum" nature regarding the right to the historic Palestine/Land of Israel. The growing religious nature of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict since 1967 further deepened the abyss between the two peoples and their national aspirations.

The Israeli–Palestinian peacemaking efforts beginning in the early 1990s demonstrated the quest of Israeli policymakers to deal with the issue of territories occupied in 1967, first and foremost to absolve themselves of the burden of directly governing and pacifying the Palestinian population in those territories albeit without compromising Israel's overall control of historic Palestine. The Palestinians, however, perceived the

Oslo Accords as a starting point to resolve all the outstanding problems in the conflict since 1948, including the refugee problem, and to establish their independent state within the June 1967 borders.

Although the two-state solution has long been endorsed by not only most Israelis and Palestinians but also the international community, it has become increasingly a remote reality. Moreover, though the parameters of the two-state solution set by President Bill Clinton shortly before ending his presidential term have been adopted by all later US administrations and have been endorsed by Israel and the International Quartet (the UN, Russia, the European Union, and the United States) established in 2002 to promote a settlement of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, they have all failed to bridge the irreconcilable differences between the two parties concerned.

That the Israeli political echelons embraced Trump's deal, translating it as a *carte blanche* to annex unilaterally the Jordan Valley and the settlements in the West Bank to Israel, clearly defined how far the Israeli political system has moved away from its position in previous permanent status negotiations. Trump's political decisions thus deeply eroded the prospects for an agreed-upon Israeli–Palestinian settlement.

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CHAPTER 27

ISRAEL AND THE ARAB WORLD

ITAMAR RABINOVICH

IN the second half of the 2010s Israeli leaders and policymakers tended to express their delight with Israel's good relationship with several Sunni Arab states, as well as to suggest a regional approach to the resolution of the underlying and persistent Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The phrase “regional approach” refers to the notion of relying on such major Sunni Arab states as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan as partners in the resolution of the Palestinian issue. There was and is a substantive dimension to this view. Israel has full-fledged peaceful and diplomatic relations with Egypt and Jordan, as well as working relationships with several other Sunni Arab states, and the Arab consensus endorsed in 2007 the Saudi initiative for resolving the Arab–Israeli conflict. But these relationships rest on a very slender base. Egypt and Jordan are committed to the peace treaties with Israel, and both countries maintain security relationships with it. Other Sunni Arab countries share with Israel common enmity with Iran and Jihadi Islam and maintain various forms of cooperation with Israel, mostly under the table. In a Middle East shaped by political turmoil, Iranian expansionism, the resurgence of Russia, and a decreased American commitment and presence, Israel does not necessarily seem the archenemy it used to be decades earlier. But the perspective of the political and governing elites is not shared by Arab public opinion. The Arab publics, affected by Islamist influence, the mass media, and social media, continue to view Israel as an alien, illegitimate presence in their midst and the oppressor of the Palestinians. It does not take much for these sentiments to erupt and force the hands of their governments. In July 2017, when a terrorist act near the Temple Mount led Israel to limit access to the mosques, populations and governments in the Arab world responded angrily, to the point of jeopardizing Israel's diplomatic relations with Jordan. And while Iran's quest for regional hegemony has improved Israel's relationship with Teheran's Sunni Arab rivals, it has added a formidable foe to the ranks of Israel's opponents and has reinforced the Islamic dimension of the Arab–Israeli conflict.

These developments are emblematic of the current phase of Israel's relationship with the Arab world: much better than it was at the height of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but resting on slender feet and bedeviled by the lingering Israeli-Palestinian strife. To put these events in perspective, this chapter examines the origins and unfolding of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

THE ORIGINS

The full-fledged Arab-Israeli conflict began in 1948 at the conclusion of the first Arab-Israeli war, which ended with Israel's victory and consolidation. The Arab defeat transformed the Arab-Jewish conflict in and over Palestine and the Arab states' support for the Palestinian cause into a bitter conflict between Israel and the Arab collective.

The Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine developed in the aftermath and as a product of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the formation of the British Mandate in Palestine. Arab-Jewish tensions had been apparent since the beginning of modern Jewish settlement in Ottoman Palestine after 1882. But at that point Arab nationalism—let alone Palestinian nationalism—did not exist, and the tensions between the native population and the early Zionists were local and limited. The end of World War I, the destruction of the Islamic Ottoman Empire, the rise of Arab nationalism as the dominant political and ideological force in the Levant, and British-Zionist cooperation in the construction of the Jewish “national home” in Palestine gave birth to a classic national conflict between Zionism and Palestinian Arab nationalism. Both nationalist movements were consumed by the conflict. The Arab Palestinian national movement, which developed in the 1920s and 1930s under the leadership of the mufti of Jerusalem, was determined to fight the Zionist challenge tooth and nail. It rejected any idea of coming to terms with the growing Jewish community or of collaborating with the British in the development of a constitutional framework that would have given them a majority position. Its animosity toward the Jewish community manifested itself in several rounds of riots and then in the Arab Revolt of 1936–1939.

The Zionist Jewish position was far more complex. A whole gamut of opinion developed, from a leftist liberal wing that advocated binationalism and compromise to a nationalistic trend that argued the Zionist movement would have to resort to force and rely on international support in order to build a Jewish state in the face of Palestinian Arab opposition. By the mid-1930s the leadership of the Yishuv (Jewish community in Palestine) and the Zionist movement, headed by David Ben-Gurion, had reached the conclusion that a military clash with the Palestinian Arabs and probably with part of the Arab world was inevitable if a Jewish state were to be established. The quest for statehood was intensified by the sense of an impending disaster hanging over the heads of European Jewry.

Ben-Gurion's belief that some of the Arab states were likely to join the Palestinian Arabs in a future military conflict derived from the growing involvement of the emerging

system of Arab states in the Palestine conflict. A full-fledged Arab system emerged only at the end of World War II as the power of Great Britain and France declined and countries like Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Syria came to enjoy real, if not full, independence. A combination of ideological commitment to pan-Arabism, genuine solidarity with the Palestinian Arabs, and state and dynastic interests drew these Arab states into the Palestinian issue in support of the Palestinian Arabs. The latter encouraged Arab participation in the conflict in an understandable effort to increase their leverage (the Palestinians came to regret this development when they realized that they had lost control over their own destiny and become dependent on the Arab states' interests). But there was another side to the relationship between the Arab collective and the Palestinian issue. As early as 1919, a school of thought emerged within the Zionist leadership that sought to resolve the Palestinian conflict through an agreement with the larger Arab world. The rationale underlying this approach argued that it was much easier for the Zionist movement to come to terms with leaders who had a larger scope rather than fight with the Palestinian leadership over the limited territory of Palestine. This was the logic behind the abortive agreement, drafted but not signed, between the Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann and the Hashemite prince (and future king) Faysal in 1919. This motif remained part of the Arab-Israeli relationship throughout the twentieth century and up to the present.

1948 AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

The UN Partition Resolution of November 1947, which ended the British Mandate over Palestine and divided Palestine west of the Jordan into a Jewish state and an Arab one, was accepted by the Jewish leadership and rejected by the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states. It was followed by a civil war in Palestine and, after the declaration of Israeli statehood in May 1948, by an Arab invasion (volunteers from Syria and Egypt had joined the fray earlier). The war ended in 1949 with a series of armistice agreements between Israel and the invading Arab states (except Iraq). By the war's end, Israel controlled an area larger than the territory assigned to it by the Partition Resolution. The area known as the West Bank was annexed by Jordan, and the Gaza Strip came under Egyptian control. An Arab Palestinian state did not come into being, and the Palestinian population was dispersed. This chain of events came to be known in Arabic as the *Nakba* ("Disaster"). The term refers first and foremost to the loss of Palestine, but it soon acquired a much larger significance. The Arab world had to ask itself how several Arab states and armies were defeated by a small Jewish community in Palestine.

The ensuing soul-searching in the Arab world had several consequences. It contributed to the series of coups d'état and revolutions and more broadly to the collapse of the old order in the Arab world. But it also led to a festering of the conflict with Israel. Israel

was now seen as a bridgehead of the West implanted in the middle of the Arab world, separating Egypt from the Levant. It was easier to explain the humiliating defeat by depicting Israel not as a small, self-standing entity, but as an extension of the mighty West. Another version depicted Israel in diabolic terms. These trends were exacerbated by two other developments: the militarization and radicalization of Arab politics and the extension of the Cold War between East and West from Europe to the Middle East. By the mid-1950s it became a conflict led on the Arab side by radical nationalists allied with the Soviet Union against a pro-Western Israel. The West itself was ambivalent in its attitude toward Israel. Britain and France colluded with Israel in the rearguard action of 1956 against Egypt, but Washington was still hoping to come to terms with Arab nationalism and viewed Israel as a liability rather than as an asset.

All efforts in the immediate aftermath of the 1948 war and into the early 1960s to resolve or at least moderate the Arab–Israeli conflict failed. For one thing, the Arab world was not in a hurry. Given the disparity between itself and Israel, its leaders felt that they just had to wait, that time was on their side. In more concrete terms, they wanted massive Israeli concessions that would be a partial compensation for the loss of Palestine and the Arab world’s humiliation. In turn Israel, feeling vulnerable, was not willing to make any major concessions. In Israel’s view it had accepted the Partition Resolution, the Palestinian Arabs had rejected it and started a war, and the Arab states had joined the fray and lost. There was no reason to reward aggression and penalize compliance. Thus, by the early 1950s the conflict seemed to be endemic, defying resolution.

THE TURNING POINT OF 1967

The Six-Day War, which broke out in June 1967, was the first major turning point in the Arab–Israeli conflict. It was an unplanned war, the product of a classic case of deterioration. The Sinai Campaign of 1956 had produced eleven years of relative stability in Arab–Israeli relations. Gamal Abdel Nasser, the leader of Egypt and of Arab nationalism, concluded at the end of the Sinai Campaign that he must not be drawn into war against Israel before he was ready. He definitely was not ready in May 1967, but he was moved by Syrian provocations and by a series of miscalculations to challenge Israel by sending his army into the Sinai Peninsula. Israel responded to the challenge by launching war on June 5, 1967. In six days it defeated the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian armies and captured the Sinai, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, as well as the Golan Heights (see the chapter by Tal in this volume).

The war had manifold and far-reaching consequences. Israel demonstrated its military might and became an important regional power. Its relationship with the United States, which had been improving during the previous few years, became a close alliance. Arab nationalism, represented and symbolized by Nasser and Egypt and the Ba’ath Party in Syria, suffered a deadly blow. Arabism’s decline contributed to “the return of Islam.” An important cleavage was introduced into the relationship between the Arab

states and the Palestinians. It was not immediately apparent, but the Arab states' interests in regaining territories they lost in 1967 overshadowed their commitment to the Palestinians. The repercussions for Israel's relationship with the Palestinians were enormous. For the first time since 1948 the whole of western Palestine was under one rule, in this case Israel's. In theory, the partition that had not been implemented in 1947–1948 could now be implemented. But the war had other consequences as well. In Israel it gave birth to a movement led by the orthodox stream of Zionism, which saw the events of 1967 as an act of divine intervention, a messianic moment in the wake of which it was mandatory to settle Judea and Samaria and add them to the State of Israel (see the chapters by Barak and Pedahzur & Perliger in this volume). On the Palestinian side, the Palestinian nationalist movement that had been awakened in the early 1960s acquired a new impetus. Under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, his movement, Fatah, and the larger Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) conducted the struggle against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as well as the "Zionist entity" as such.

The Six-Day War was the first major turning point in the history of Arab–Israeli relations since 1948, but its consequences were not unequivocal. It created the conditions for a potential resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict but also compounded it. Israel's spectacular victory persuaded many Arabs that it was militarily invincible. Israel also acquired the assets that had been absent in 1949 for striking a bargain with the Arab world that would be an essential component of any settlement. On the negative side of the scale were the facts that Arab humiliation became more profound; the rise of political Islam turned an essentially political conflict into an increasingly religious one; and in Israel powerful forces emerged that sought to perpetuate the territorial status quo, which they preferred to the prospect of a political settlement.

In any event, the positive potential that was inherent in the consequences of the Six-Day War could not be exploited in its immediate aftermath. The Arab world was in no mood to accept the defeat, and at the Khartoum Arab summit in September 1967 the Arab consensus reaffirmed its traditional rejectionism. In Israel, The Land of Israel movement was founded, reinforced in short order by the Block of the Faithful settler movement as well as by a widespread mood that Israel was powerful and could wait for the Arabs to come to their senses. It took another war, the October war of 1973, for a peace process to be launched. That war was waged by Egypt and Syria, two states that had lost parts of their national territory in 1967 and were determined to regain them. Israel was caught by surprise, and the Israeli Defense Forces' performance during the first few days was disappointing. But Israel rebounded, and the war was interrupted by the superpowers when the IDF was on the Egyptian mainland, 101 kilometers from Cairo and close to Damascus. Israel was shocked by the setbacks of the prewar and the early war and paid an enormous price in losses. The Arabs, Egypt in particular, took pride in their achievements at the war's outset but realized that the failure to win a war that began so auspiciously indicated that Israel was indeed invincible. The ambiguous outcome provided an ideal setting for the US secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, to launch a peace process. Between October 1973 and September 1975 Kissinger was able to negotiate a series of limited agreements that ended the war, disengagement agreements

between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Syria, and the more impressive Egyptian–Israeli interim agreement of September 1975. Kissinger’s “step-by-step” diplomacy contested the assumption that it was impossible to negotiate a comprehensive Arab–Israeli agreement and demonstrated that the optimal way to proceed was a series of interim agreements that would prevent a relapse into war and prepare the ground for an eventual comprehensive deal.

EGYPTIAN–ISRAELI PEACE, 1977–1979

Kissinger’s approach to Arab–Israeli peacemaking appears to have run its course in 1975 and was in any event abandoned by Washington at the end of 1976 when Jimmy Carter defeated Gerald Ford in the November presidential elections. Carter came into office determined to seek comprehensive Arab–Israeli peace predicated on full Israeli withdrawal from the territories captured in 1967, Palestinian statehood, and full peace granted by the Arab world to Israel. Ironically, his efforts to achieve such a formula, his cooperation with the Soviet Union, and his courting of Syria and the PLO pushed Egypt and Israel into each other’s arms. Egypt’s leader, Anwar Sadat, was a man who believed in bold initiatives and steps. In Israel, Labor’s hegemony was broken after forty years when Menachem Begin, leader of the right-wing Likud Party, won the elections of May 1977. Begin was a devout believer in Israel’s right to control the whole of the Land of Israel, but he was willing to exclude the Sinai Peninsula from his definition of that entity. More important, he was a new leader, a man who had come to power after decades of being in the opposition, and was willing to try something new. The personal interactions among President Carter, President Sadat, and Prime Minister Begin played a major role in the success of the efforts to reach peace between Israel and Egypt. Carter’s initial response to the bilateral Israeli–Egyptian negotiations was rather negative because he preferred a comprehensive deal, but when he understood that it was significant enough to obtain peace between Israel and the major Arab state, he made a major contribution to the breakthrough that was achieved at the Camp David summit in September 1978.

The Egyptian–Israeli peace had two parts to it. The bilateral part consisted of Israeli agreement to withdraw fully from the Sinai Peninsula in return for a full-fledged, contractual peace and a satisfactory security regime in the Sinai. Egypt’s commitment to the Palestinian cause was satisfied by an autonomy agreement according to which the Palestinians were to enjoy autonomy in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for a transitional period. The full-fledged Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty was signed in 1979 and was a milestone in Israel’s relationship with the Arab world. Not only did Israel win peace and recognition from an Arab party, but that party was the Arab world’s largest and most important state. Sadat was initially denounced and ostracized by the other Arabs, but he told them defiantly that they would come to see that he was right and that they would follow in his footsteps. He was correct.

From Israel's point of view, peace with Egypt was an important step in changing the Arab world's view of the Jewish state. The end of belligerency with Egypt became an important pillar in Israel's national security. But one of Begin's major assumptions when he made peace with Egypt and gave up the Sinai was proven wrong. Begin believed that Sadat was in fact ready to make a separate peace with Israel and that the autonomy plan did not have to be taken seriously. Over the next few years he discovered that this was not the case and that the Palestinian challenge presented by the PLO, primarily from its base in Lebanon, remained powerful. It is against this backdrop that Begin's terrible mistake of being drawn into the 1982 war in Lebanon should be viewed.

Israel also discovered that its bilateral peace with Egypt was destined to remain a "cold peace." Egypt's government made peace with Israel, but there were large and strong currents of opinion in Egypt, among Islamists and Nasserites, who opposed the peace and continued to boycott Israel and Israelis. As the regime's disappointment with Israel's failure to implement the autonomy plan mounted and was aggravated by the Lebanon war, the regime itself developed a strategy of keeping the letter of the peace treaty but not its spirit. This policy came to be known as "the cold peace." Israel itself acted with ambivalence. After years of being completely cut off from its regional environment, the prospect of being integrated at least in part into the region proved frightening to many Israelis, who preferred the comfort and familiarity of the Israel they knew and were terrified by the notion of open borders with the Arab world.

The 1979 Israeli–Egyptian peace treaty was followed by thirteen years of stalemate. Israel became preoccupied with the 1982 war in Lebanon and its aftermath, and the Arab world was preoccupied with the long Iran–Iraq war. It was only in 1991 that an Arab–Israeli peace process was renewed, at the initiative of the George H. W. Bush administration in the wake of the First Gulf War.

THE MADRID PEACE PROCESS, 1991–1996

The most ambitious effort to resolve the Arab–Israeli conflict was the product of several developments: the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, America's new position as the world's only superpower, and the Gulf crisis and the First Gulf War (1990–1991). At the end of the Gulf War, Washington enjoyed an unprecedented position in the Middle East; the world's only superpower had just saved its Arab friends (Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) from Iraqi aggression and demonstrated its immense military superiority. During the war, ballistic missiles were used for the first time in an Arab–Israeli context when Saddam's Iraq fired Scud missiles into Israel. It seemed both urgent and feasible to take advantage of Washington's new and unique position to try to resolve the Arab–Israeli conflict (see the chapter by Stein in this volume).

To this end the Madrid summit was convened in October 1991, and a framework was created for the negotiations. Israel was to negotiate bilaterally with three delegations: Syrian, Lebanese, and Jordanian–Palestinian. At the same time, five working groups

were established to discuss multilateral issues (water, environment, refugees, arms control, and economic development). The inclusion of the Palestinians as a junior partner in a combined Jordanian–Palestinian delegation reflected the PLO’s weakened position in the aftermath of the Gulf War, in which Arafat had gambled on Saddam Hussein and become anathema to the Gulf Arabs. It also made it easier for Israel’s right-wing leader, Yitzhak Shamir, to participate in the Madrid process. Shamir’s willingness to go to Madrid should be seen against the backdrop of the first Palestinian intifada, which had broken out in December 1987. It was a spontaneous uprising of the Palestinian population that after twenty years of Israeli occupation forced the IDF to deal not with terrorists but with civilian opposition. Its impact on Israel’s population and mood was far-reaching.

THE MADRID PEACE PROCESS: YEARS OF HOPE

The peace process launched in Madrid started in earnest almost a year later, after the formation of Yitzhak Rabin’s government in the summer of 1992. His predecessor, Yitzhak Shamir, had sent a delegation to the Madrid conference, and his government had participated in the ensuing negotiations, but his concept of peace was limited. This concept and the difficulties inherent in the peace process were responsible for a slow and problematic beginning. Rabin came to power determined to take advantage of the Madrid framework to put Israel’s relationship with its Arab neighbors on a new basis. For Rabin, the real danger to Israel lay in the east, with Iran and Iraq. To cope with that challenge, he wanted to fix Israel’s relationship with its immediate neighbors. Rabin’s original approach was modest: he wanted an autonomy agreement with the Palestinians, to be negotiated with local leaders rather than the PLO. At the same time he was also willing to test the prospect of making peace with Syria, similar to the agreement made with Egypt in 1979.

One of the foundations of Rabin’s strategy in the peace process was his preference for dealing with individual Arab states rather than with the Arab collective. This perspective dated back to Rabin’s first experience in peacemaking with the Arabs as a member of the Israeli delegation to the Rhodes conference in 1949. Rabin and his colleagues had discovered that the Arab collective pursued a tough line determined by its most radical members and that it was much easier to deal separately with individual Arab states. Indeed, a distinction had and has to be made between Israel’s larger conflict with the Arab collective and the series of bilateral conflicts it has had with particular Arab states. Thus, the Israeli–Egyptian conflict, beyond having to deal with Egypt’s commitment to Arabism and the Palestinian issue, has also been shaped by the competition, sometimes explicit, sometimes more subtle, between two powerful states over seniority and hegemony in the region. This helps explain Egypt’s negative impact on the multilateral peace

process in the mid-1990s. In theory, Egypt should have been delighted by the Oslo Accords, which finally implemented the commitments made by Begin to Sadat in 1979. In practice, however, Egypt became worried by the prospect of Israeli integration into the region and by the role it could conceivably play in the area's politics and economy. When a large Israeli delegation arrived at the Casablanca regional economic conference in 1994, the Egyptians were visibly unhappy and lost no time obstructing the work of the multilateral working groups. Jordan's relationship with Israel has been entirely different. In fact, that relationship has to be seen not as a bilateral one but as a trilateral one, since Israel, Hashemite Jordan, and the Palestinian National Movement have been engaged since the 1920s in a three-sided relationship whose nature has changed several times over the years. During most periods, the Zionist movement, Israel, and the Hashemites have seen themselves as allies rather than as rivals within that relationship.¹

For many years it was common in Israel to state that "Lebanon would be the second Arab state to make peace with Israel." This cliché was based on the assumption that as a Christian-dominated country, Lebanon had no real conflict with Israel and would be waiting for the first major Arab state to make peace with Israel in order to follow suit. This belief was never quite true and is definitely not true now, when Lebanon is dominated by the Shiite community and Iran's proxy, Hezbollah.

Israel's relationship with Syria has been more complex. For more than forty years, from 1949 to 1992, Syria was considered Israel's most implacable Arab enemy. The significance of its Arab identity, the closeness of Syria to the Palestinian Arabs, and the particular circumstances under which the 1948 war came to an end had all contributed to this relationship. In 1992 Syria's president, Hafez al-Asad, under the impact of regional and international changes, joined the Madrid peace process. A serious Israeli-Syrian negotiation began under Rabin in 1993 and was pursued on and off for the next eighteen years under several Israeli prime ministers, several times coming to the brink of an achievement but never quite reaching it. In the aftermath of the Syrian civil war and the question marks regarding the country's very future, the prospects for renewed negotiations seem dim (Rabinovich, 1998).

The first breakthrough in the peace process of the 1990s was achieved with the PLO in a parallel secret track held in Oslo (see the chapter by Sela in this volume). The Oslo Accords, formally signed in Washington, DC, in September 1993, formed an interim agreement for five years based to a large extent on the autonomy plan that had been part of the Camp David accord and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979. The major difference was the mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO and Israel's agreement that Arafat, his entourage, and his security apparatus could govern the new Palestinian Authority (PA) established in Gaza and in the part of the West Bank. The first Oslo agreement was supplemented in September 1995 by the Oslo II agreement and was to be completed by final status negotiations between Israel and the PA. The Oslo Accords paved the way for a second Arab-Israeli peace treaty, signed between Israel and Jordan in October 1994, and for significant normalization of Israel's relationships with several other Arab states. The Israeli-Syrian negotiations did not lead to an agreement. The

broad lines of a potential agreement were drawn up in the negotiations of the years 1992–1996, but these negotiations were never completed.

These achievements laid the basis for the most optimistic phase in Israel's relationship with the Arab world. On both sides of the Arab–Israeli divide it was widely felt that an end to the conflict could be negotiated. But this failed to happen. The Oslo peace process was obstructed by actions taken by both parties. More important, it was undermined by opposition and terror. Palestinian terrorists, mostly identified with the Hamas movement and supported by Iran, launched waves of terror in Israeli cities and turned the Israeli public against the peace process. On the Israeli side, a Jewish terrorist perpetrated a massacre of Palestinians in the Tomb of Patriarchs in Hebron in 1994, and another assassinated Yitzhak Rabin on November 4, 1995, in order to derail the Oslo process. There were additional difficulties and challenges. Frustrated by the failure to regain the Golan Heights, Syria agitated against the peace process. Egypt, initially a supporter of the Oslo process, discovered that Israel was a potential competitor for hegemony in the region and began to undermine the peace process. Arab Islamists and nationalist intellectuals agitated against the acceptance of Israel. In Israel, opposition to the Oslo process and to the prospect of withdrawal from the Golan Heights gained momentum.

Rabin's successor, Shimon Peres, was determined to continue the peace process and chose the Syrian track as his first priority. This was a miscalculation, and the new negotiations foundered. A fresh wave of Palestinian terrorism in the winter and early spring of 1996 contributed to Peres's loss in the parliamentary election to Likud's leader, Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu promised to uphold the Oslo Accords, but once elected, he acted to emasculate them. He lost the election of 1999 to Ehud Barak, who vowed and acted to complete the negotiations on both the Syrian and Palestinian tracks. In the event, both efforts failed. Most resonant was the failure of the Camp David summit in July 2000. When Arafat had signed the Oslo Accords in September 1993, he had acted on the assumption that the Palestinians were weak and that time was on Israel's side. By July 2000 his view had changed, and he was not willing to sign a final status agreement offering Israel finality and an end of claims. During the presummit negotiations and in Camp David, Ehud Barak broke several taboos, but an agreement was not reached. The failure of the Camp David summit led directly to the second intifada, which broke out in September 2000. This eruption of violence marked the end of the most ambitious effort to resolve the Arab–Israeli conflict. The Israeli Center Left and Left, the major supporters of a peace settlement with the Palestinians, suffered a deadly blow.

THE PEACE PROCESS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The peace process did not come to an end with the outbreak of the second intifada. Ariel Sharon, the leader of the Israeli right wing who came to power in February 2001 and crushed the second intifada, took Israel out of Gaza in 2005 and dismantled the Israeli

settlements in that region. The G. W. Bush administration launched the Annapolis process, which culminated in a far-reaching proposal made by Sharon's successor, Ehud Olmert, to Arafat's successor, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), in the summer and fall of 2008. Bush's successor, Barack Obama, and his secretary of state, John Kerry, invested massive efforts between 2009 and 2016 in trying to renew and resolve the Israeli–Palestinian negotiations. The efforts to negotiate an Israeli–Syrian agreement did not cease with Peres's failure in the winter of 1996. Netanyahu, Barak, and Olmert continued those negotiations intermittently until the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in March 2011.

But these efforts did not quite approximate the seriousness of those in the years 1992–2000. Instead of a sustained, single-minded effort to resolve the Arab–Israeli conflict, a far more complex reality has crystallized. This reality is the product of a series of developments in the region, in the Arab world, in Israel, and among the Palestinians.

The Middle Eastern regional environment has been transformed by the addition of two powerful regional actors: Iran and Turkey. These are two Muslim successor states to Middle Eastern empires, both large countries with a population of around eighty million people each, strong economies, and powerful militaries. Both have regional ambitions. Iran is a Shiite country, determined to acquire regional hegemony relying mostly on Shiite allies and clients. Iran advocates absolute animosity to Israel and to the notion of Arab–Israeli reconciliation. It also built in Lebanon a pro-Iranian militia, Hezbollah, which led the successful campaign against Israeli occupation of south Lebanon in the aftermath of the 1982 war. Hezbollah's success became the inspiration for those in the region who believe in the notion of resistance as opposed to reconciliation (denounced as capitulation). Once Iran, in cooperation with Russia, had secured Bashar al-Asad's regime in Syria at the end of 2016, it launched a two pronged effort—to build a land bridge across Iraq and Syria to the Mediterranean and to establish a military infrastructure in Syria posing a direct challenge to Israel. Israel is determined to thwart these efforts and in the years 2018–2020 Syria became an arena of Iranian–Israeli military conflict. The Iranian–Israeli conflict seems at times to overshadow the Arab–Israeli one.

Turkey is a Sunni country and a supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood's version of Islamic fundamentalism. In the Israeli–Palestinian context it supports Hamas, the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Turkey maintains diplomatic relations with Israel, but under Recep Tayyip Erdogan it is a fierce critic of Israeli policies. The roles played by Iran and Turkey have reformed the transformation of the Arab–Israeli conflict from an essentially national and political conflict into a dispute with a major religious component. This trend has been reinforced by the role played in Israeli politics by religious nationalist parties and factions. The rise of the Islamic State organization (ISIS) has exacerbated the religious dimension of the conflict. At this point ISIS is focused on Arab regimes, but it represents a radical jihadi opposition to Israel's very existence.

These developments are countered by a change in the perception of Israel by the Gulf Arab and other Sunni states in the region. The Iranian–Shiite challenge and the challenge of ISIS are seen as the gravest threats to these regimes. In this context, Israel seems less menacing and furthermore an actual and potential ally. The change in the Saudi

perspective surfaced in 2002 when Saudi Arabia launched the Saudi peace initiative. According to this plan the Arab world would make peace and normalize relations with Israel in return for full withdrawal to the boundaries of June 4, 1967. The Saudi peace initiative was adopted by the Arab League and is now known as the “Arab peace initiative.” The initiative is not a full-fledged plan and contains some problematic elements from Israel’s point of view, but its very formulation was an important development in Israel’s relationship with the Arab world. In February 1945 Saudi Arabia’s king, Ibn Saud, met with President Franklin D. Roosevelt and devoted much of his time to an anti-Zionist tirade. Saudi policy has come a long way since that episode. This trend has been reinforced in subsequent years, to the point of encouraging several Israeli leaders to speak of “regional peace.” This concept assumes that it would be easier for Israel to resolve the Palestinian issue through and in cooperation with the Arab states. But this is an overly optimistic approach. In order for the Arab states to develop their discrete relationships with Israel and to play a role in facilitating a resolution of the Palestinian problem, Israel will have to be ready to make the concessions offered by such leaders as Barak and Olmert, which have not been acceptable to Netanyahu’s government in the first and second decades of the current century.

When Donald Trump was elected president of the United States, he stated several times his desire to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which he describes as “the ultimate deal.” To this end he appointed a special negotiator and assigned his son-in-law and adviser to the same task. The so-called Trump Plan for ending the Israeli–Palestinian conflict was finally published in January 2020, and it signified a paradigm shift in US policy. It did speak of eventual two-state solution and of expanding the territory of the Gaza Strip, but all told it adopted the narrative and several of the positions of Israel’s right wing. But in the spring of 2020, given the fluctuations of US and Israeli politics, the feasibility of the Trump plan remained uncertain.

The PA is now divided between the West Bank, led by Abu Mazen and Fatah, and the Gaza Strip, led by Hamas. Hamas is opposed to the very idea of peaceful resolution of the conflict (though not to the notion of a long-term armistice). It is clear that Abu Mazen’s tenure is coming to an end, and the future of the PA is uncertain. The uncertainty is enhanced by yet another effort, perhaps more serious than earlier ones, to negotiate a Palestinian reconciliation. Among the Palestinians there is growing pessimism, a sense that the two-state solution is dead. Not all Palestinians regret this trend. Many believe that one statehood is inevitable, and in the long term this could mark the end of the Zionist enterprise.

This argument is at the very center of the public and political debate in Israel. In 2018 and 2019 Israel was governed by the most right-wing government in its history. The more radical right-wing elements in the government were openly opposed to the idea of a two-state solution and sought to annex the West Bank, or at least to perpetuate the Israeli presence in and control of that territory. These groups were not worried by the prospect of drifting toward one statehood. Prime Minister Netanyahu and the more pragmatic right wing that he leads and represents were paying lip service to the idea of a two-state solution but in fact found themselves trailing after the radical Right. The

Center and Left in Israeli politics advocate the idea of a two-state solution and warn of the dire consequences of perpetuating the status quo, but they lack the authoritative leadership and political muscle to take Israel back to the heyday of the peace process. The publication of the Trump Plan in January 2020 prompted a new debate on the annexation of parts of the West Bank by Israel. Such an annexation was included in the plan as part of an integrated approach that included also significant Israeli concessions. Netanyahu's government sought to pick the annexation element from the plan and implement at least part of it unilaterally. Following several months of uncertainty the Trump Administration finally indicated to Netanyahu that he was opposed to such an annexation. The issue was further delayed by the formation of national unity government in May 2020 in the aftermath of three election campaigns that failed to produce a decision in the Israeli national debate.

It was Netanyahu's persistent quest to annex parts of the West Bank prior to the implementation of the Trump Plan that enabled the Trump Administration in August 2020 to produce a new phase in the Arab World's relationship with Israel. It persuaded the Emirates, in return for an Israeli commitment to suspend the notion of annexation and for its own willingness to provide the UAE with sophisticated weapon systems, to agree to normalize relations with Israel. The Emirates were joined by Bahrain and in a more limited way, in October, by Sudan. Beyond the immediate transactions with Washington, these moves reflected a more profound frame of mind in parts of the Sunni Arab world: a determination to cooperate openly with Israel against common enemies and rivals (Iran, Turkey and Jihadis). and to pursue its own interest in the face of Palestinian inaction and opposition. These were important milestones in the evolution of Arab-Israeli relations but they did not signify the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel continues to face the Palestinian issue while the Palestinian cause is increasingly championed by two non-Arab regional powers: Iran and Turkey.

NOTE

1. Avi Shlaim presents an intriguing but overstated view of this relationship in his study of Israeli-Jordanian relations (Shlaim, 1988; see also Rabinovich, 1991).

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CHAPTER 28

US–ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP

KENNETH W. STEIN

THE US–Israeli relationship is complicated, dynamic, multidimensional, and enduring. It is, as Dennis Ross’s book title describes it, *Doomed to Succeed* (Ross, 2015). Former US ambassador to Israel Samuel W. Lewis said the “relationship exists like a marriage of old: you can love each other, yell at each other, disagree with each other, even leave each other for a period of time, but you do not get a divorce. It is deeper and wider than government-to-government. It is unique among all our relationships in the world” (Lewis, 2011). The relationship as defined by American policymakers has developed from open disdain for Jews, Zionism, and a Jewish state in the 1940s, to characterizing the US–Israeli connection as a strategic asset in 2018 (Stein, 2018).

Ups and downs in the relationship have progressively evolved into a spider web of entrenched and mutually beneficial relations, connecting their respective bureaucracies, economies, militaries, educational institutions, scientific research, and populations. There is no written treaty between the two countries, but rather many understandings, letters of assurances, memorandums of agreement, congressional letters of support, weapons supply assurances, economic aid and technology agreements, intelligence analyses sharing agreements, and close partnerships in virtually all military and civilian fields. In the United Nations (UN) and in other international organizations where the world imbalance against Israel has been incessantly toxic, Israel has looked upon Washington to speak up on its behalf to oppose efforts aimed at harming and delegitimizing the state.

Entangling the state-to-state associations of the two countries are the rooted connections whereby the two largest Jewish communities in the world influence one another. Israel has had a profound impact on the definition and development of American Jewish identity. Likewise, American Jews have played supporting and at times intrusive roles in Israeli politics and policies.

For American Jews in particular, Israel is a lightning rod for political engagement in several spheres. Israel is the center where Jews interact with fellow Jews about

self-definition and the care of Jews worldwide. Diaspora Jews, including those in North America, similarly identify with a resilient Jewish past and Israel's story of perseverance and feel its pain at setbacks. Since the Six-Day War in June 1967, American Jews have increasingly articulated divergent views about policies Israel should adopt toward its Arab neighbors and particularly the Palestinians. For many American Jews, Israel is more than the re-establishment of an ancient homeland in the form of a modern nation-state. American Jews have made Israel a keen focus of their communal and institutional activities, including it as a place to visit, learn, and take pride about a common Jewish past. Israel has evolved for many of them into an effective focal point for participation in the American political system—a process that has promoted strong support for the US–Israeli relationship. More recently, American politics has influenced Israel's policy choices with regard to the territories (portions of Jerusalem and the West Bank, and Golan Heights secured in the June 1967 War).

In the last four decades, with the advent of the twenty-four-hour news cycle, there have evolved more frequent and unsparing rebukes of Israel's political choices by Jewish scholars, newspaper writers, clergy, and organizations. And yet without much doubt, Jewish Americans feel a strong emotional connection with the Jewish state. A solid majority say they are either “very” or “somewhat” attached to Israel and that caring about Israel is either “essential” or “important” to what being Jewish means to them. The connection is felt both ways; most Israeli Jews say Jewish Americans have a good impact on the way things are going in Israel. In addition, most Israeli Jews say that a thriving diaspora is vital to the long-term survival of the Jewish people and that Jews in the two countries share a “common destiny” (Pew Research Center, 2017; see the chapter by Sucharov in this volume).

THE UNITED STATES AND THE MIDDLE EAST IN CONTEXT

Washington's relationship with Israel is only part of a much broader set of varied, competing, often well-defined, but also frequently changing American interests in the Middle East. Understanding those interests allows for a firmer comprehension of the context within which the US–Israeli relationship is situated. Among them are the following nine constants that comprise American foreign policy objectives, some present since the end of World II and others added more recently, all of which have had some direct or indirect influence on how the US–Israeli relationship has unfolded. At one time or other, the United States has sought to

- preserve the stable existence of moderate Arab and Muslim states;
- ensure the security of Israel;
- safeguard access to Middle Eastern oil at reasonable prices;

- protect and ensure physical access thru Middle Eastern waterways (Suez Canal, Bab al-Mandab straits, Bosphorus–Dardenelles, and Straits of Hormuz);
- deny infiltration to or reduce the strength of countries or ideologies that are hostile to Western values;
- limit growth of views or insurgencies that are regional or transnational threats to the stability and preservation of moderate states and to the United States and its allies (Hamas, Hezbollah, ICIS, al-Qaeda, ISIS, Islamic radicalism);
- curb the spread of regional terrorism and weapons of mass destruction;
- promote religious freedom, human rights, and self-determination; and
- engage in mediating Arab–Israeli negotiations.

American foreign policy concerns by necessity have remained more numerous than Israel's unique and more narrow foreign policy priorities. In the third decade of the twenty-first century, with Middle Eastern countries tattered by civil wars, insurgencies, brutal autocracies, sectarian strife, transnational matters, burgeoning Iranian hegemony, falling oil prices, and massive population dislocations, there are more issues than Washington can cope with in any effective manner. Even managing them, regardless of the administration in power, remains a stifling undertaking. American interests in the Middle East in the 1950s in the midst of the Cold War were certainly less complex than those in 2020, although no less troubling.

Balancing interests while containing physical and ideological threats to the region has typified the definition and navigation of American foreign policy across the world. American objectives in the Middle East since the end of World War II have tended to be status quo in orientation. Washington's policy shifts to the Middle East and toward individual countries have occurred most often in responses to regional leadership changes and sudden unfolding events, with persistent fears that Middle Eastern conflicts would spill over into larger regional conflicts or nuclear confrontations that would adversely affect the security of the United States.

Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser's rejection of American overtures in the 1950s helped drive Washington closer to Israel; President Anwar Sadat's voluntary engagement with the United States in the 1970s pushed Washington closer to an Arab leader, adding tolerable friction to the US–Israeli relationship. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iraq in 1990 accelerated Arab Gulf states closer toward Washington to uphold their security and territorial integrity against a regional bully; those states in turn responded to American overtures that unfolded Arab–Israeli negotiations from the Madrid 1991 Middle East Conference through the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords and eventually the 1994 Jordanian–Israeli Treaty.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent flight of Iran's Shah Reza Pahlavi in 1979 propelled America away from the almost exclusive geographic concentration (Arab–Israeli and Cold War issues) in the eastern Mediterranean to include the Gulf region and the rise of Islam as a troublesome platform for anti-American activism. The September 2001 attacks on the United States, followed by American engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq, expanded America's foreign policy priorities to focus on tamping

down violently radical political Islam, preventing the implosion of Arab state systems and illusive extrication of the American military presence. The “Arab Spring” of 2011–2012 seriously undermined the fabric of half a dozen Middle Eastern states, emphasizing once again that in contrast, Israel was a reliable and supportive ally and resolving the Arab–Israeli conflict was not a panacea for an untroubled Middle East.

Well into the 1980s, Washington viewed its steps in the Middle East through the prism of Moscow. Detente became a vehicle for containment. Would any policy choice incur a slide toward a US–USSR face-to-face confrontation in the region? Fear of a superpower war in the Middle East repeated itself respectively during the 1956 Suez War, the Six-Day War in June 1967, at the end of the War of Attrition in August 1970, and again at the end of the Yom Kippur War in October 1973.

Could any action by Washington prevent a country like Lebanon or Jordan or any others from being taken over by leaders sympathetic to Moscow or communism? In the last twenty years, curbing the growth of al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and ICS; containing Iranian nuclear territorial adventurism; and figuring out how to respond to the Shia–Sunni chasm between Iran and most Sunni Arab Gulf states has absorbed America’s attention. Over this span of time, Washington’s foreign policy has sustained, broken, and mended relationships with multiple countries and organizations in the Middle East. Since the June 1967 war, no country has been more of an advocate for Palestinian self-determination than the United States. Simultaneously, Washington has deepened its relationship with Israel to depths that could not have been remotely anticipated by anti-Zionist American State Department officials in the late 1940s. How has the US–Israeli relationship changed, its complexities grown, and its resilience been sustained?

THE RELATIONSHIP: ITS PREDICATE AND THE EARLY YEARS

Steadfast political and religious precepts inextricably bind the two countries and their populations. Attributes of freedom, liberty, the rule of law, the struggle for self-determination, belief in God, capitalism, protection of individual rights, a free press, separation of powers, regular elections, and democratic forms of government unite the peoples in the two countries. Israel, with its absolute link to Jewish history, inherited a particular political culture unique to its size and its Jewish identity. As a minority wherever they lived, Jews were constantly insecure and living at the whim of others. That forced Jews to adapt and taught them to improvise and accommodate to both the more powerful and their surroundings. In forming a state, Zionists imbibed their sense of insecurity from centuries of precarious living, reworked with nineteenth- and twentieth-century racial anti-Semitism, Hitler’s Germany, the Mufti’s actions and incantations, and later Arab leaders who bellowed to drive the Jews into the sea or at least expel them from their ancestral homeland.

Integral to Israeli foreign policy is the mantra “Never Again.” Jews should never be helpless or stateless again. To assure that objective is never compromised, Zionists and Israelis have remained in constant search for major powers, sustaining relationships with them to ensure that tomorrow is reached. Israel’s small geographic footprint and population forced it to affirm a military doctrine to fight its wars and battles on the enemy’s territory. Israel’s civil religion is the devotion to its readiness to act devoutly against military foes and communally against civilian threats like the coronavirus pandemic. As a state, its core strategic objectives include preserving the ability of a Jewish majority to make sovereign and independent decisions, protecting the physical security and economic well-being of its population, and keeping the state available as a key link to diaspora Jewry for purposes of identity and assistance to Jews in need or in crisis worldwide (see the chapter by Freilich in this volume).

Israel’s relationship with Washington has grown to become Jerusalem’s most important state-to-state affiliation. Israel’s interest in an extraordinarily strong relationship with Washington enhances its national security. Washington’s relationship with Israel evolved slowly, grew marginally in the late 1950s, ripened to become more entwined after the June 1967 war, and thickened immensely from the 1980s forward. In the 1930s and 1940s, while the United States pulled through the Great Depression and fought wars in Europe and the Pacific, official US State Department attitudes were blatantly anti-Semitic.

Indicating how expendable Jews were and that the United States was not going to provide them refuge, the US State Department denied eligible Jewish refugees visas to enter the country. President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s (FDR) secretary of state, Cordell Hull, and assistant secretary of state, Breckinridge Long, and those in the Western European division at the State Department, including Jay Pierrepont Moffat, William Carr, and William Phillips, imposed immigration restrictions on Jews and suppressed information about Hitler’s extermination plans. This was all motivated by their personal dislike of Jews. The president himself refused to bomb Hitler’s Jewish extermination camps. In February 1945 FDR, two months before his death, told Saudi Arabia’s king Saud at their meeting at the Suez Canal that he as the chief executive would “take no action . . . which might prove hostile to the Arab people” and “do nothing to assist the Jews against the Arabs,” and yet earlier the president had suggested to American Zionists that Palestine should be open to Jewish refugees (Radosh & Radosh, 2009, pp. 18–30; Stephens, 2006, p. 15). FDR’s attitudes and that of the Department of State reflected a decidedly anti-Semitic, pro-Arab stance and anti-Zionist mantra.

After World War II, Jerusalem connected initially with Washington while Israel was a state in the making. At that moment, its general populace had been seared by the brutal ravages of human loss in the Holocaust. It had a tiny population relative to its neighbors. Neighboring Arab leaders sought its destruction before its establishment. The head of the Arab League of States, Azzam Pasha, fervently declared in September 1947 to Jewish Agency representatives who offered a two-state solution, “You [Zionists] won’t get anything by peaceful means or compromise . . . in all events, the [Zionist–Arab] problem now is only soluble by the force of arms. We were able to drive out the Crusaders, but on

the other hand we lost Spain and Persia. It may be that we shall lose Palestine" (quoted in Horowitz, 1953, pp. 233–235).

After the British announced their departure from Palestine in 1947, the British administration in Palestine and the Foreign Office in London vigorously, in word and deed, tilted toward Arab states and away from the Zionists, particularly after the UN voted for partition in November 1947. Britain's objectives aimed at stifling the Jewish state's emergence and seeking international approval to renew the British presence in Palestine, a two-pronged policy that was heavily endorsed by the US State Department. Washington was the first country to recognize Israel after it issued its declaration of independence. A memo from Clark Clifford indicates that it was not so much the State Department that procrastinated in providing *de jure* recognition to Israel well into the middle of June 1948 as it was "Mr. Henderson's own representations" to have Israel trade away some of its territorial gains, because it is "necessary to conciliate the Arabs" (Clifford, 1948).

For the 1946–1948 period, memorandums written in the Department of State for Secretary of State George Marshall and President Harry Truman against a Jewish state, as evidenced in the *Foreign Relations Documents of the United States*, demonstrate virulent anti-Zionist outlooks. Loy Henderson, head of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs at the Department of State, admitted that while he served he was "rabidly anti-Zionist" (Henderson, 1973). The single largest array of any group of State Department officials over the history of the department who opposed Zionism and a Jewish state were present and virtually unanimous in their views at the moment of Israel's establishment.

Henderson, formerly the US minister in Iraq and later ambassador to Iran during the coup that restored the shah to power in 1953, was one of half a dozen key figures who all believed, in the strongest possible way, that a Jewish state was a grave political and strategic liability to the US national interest. Supporting Zionism was perceived as aggravating America's postwar fear about the aggressive nature of the Soviet Union and communism. Other anti-Zionists included George Kennan, who was head of the Policy Planning Staff at the Department of State; Under-Secretary of State Robert Lovett; his predecessor, Dean Acheson, who would become Truman's secretary of state from 1949 to 1953; Charles Bohlen, the number three person at the Department of State; Dean Rusk, then the director of United Nations Affairs and later John Kennedy's and Lyndon Johnson's secretary of state (1961–1969); Secretary of State Marshall (1947–1949); and Defense Secretary James Forrestal (1947–1949) (Clifford & Holbrooke, 2008).

Each of these officials inveighed publicly or privately against Zionism. Each proclaimed that the UN's November 1947 General Assembly resolution to partition Palestine into Arab and Jewish states was contrary to American national interests and that Washington's support of a Jewish state would first ultimately lose Washington Arab allies and second put it on a military collision course with Stalin's Soviet Union. The reasoning went that once the United States sided with Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish state, Arab states, which so feverishly opposed a Jewish presence in the eastern Mediterranean, would be driven into the unwanted embrace of the Soviet Union and communism. At that moment, the United States wanted to "contain" the Soviet Union's expansionism in the eastern Mediterranean and not give Moscow easy access to new allies, as it was seeking simultaneously in other regions of the world.

Moscow's pragmatic UN support for a Jewish state had been clearly aimed at hastening the prospects for Moscow to fill any physical void left by a declining British influence in Palestine, perhaps ultimately hastening British departure from Transjordan and Egypt too. A third argument against a Jewish state was predicated on a real or imagined fear that Arab armies would crush the emerging Jewish paramilitary organizations. This in turn would force American military intervention to rescue Jews from another holocaust. In such an eventuality, it was reasoned that American troops would have to be stationed in the Jewish state to sustain its very existence.

If that occurred, the Soviet Union would find an excuse to confront the United States physically in the Middle East. Other articulated reasons to oppose partition, Zionism, and the establishment of a Jewish state included fear of jeopardizing US and its Western allies' access to the Suez Canal and to Arab oil sources, as well as the belief that pro-Western Arab leaders would be tossed from office (Kennan, 1948).

THE RELATIONSHIP: DEEPENING AND WITH DIFFERENCES

Once the Cold War between the United States and USSR emerged as the most dominant theme in international relations, it drove American presidents to view their relations with Middle Eastern states and with states elsewhere in the world through that prevailing prism. Proclaiming to contain Soviet aggression, prevent the spread and growth of communism, and thwart the evolution of Moscow-led alliances with client states, the United States for thirty years issued containment policies: in 1947 the Truman Doctrine, in 1957 the Eisenhower Doctrine, in 1980 the Carter Doctrine, and in the 1980s the Reagan Doctrine.

In the Middle East, Washington supported states and alliance systems that would geographically curb Moscow's penetration into the eastern Mediterranean. It cultivated warm relations with the southern tier of Muslim states that included Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. It supported Arab Gulf states as well as Israel. Gradually, however, Arab states went through a series of revolutions in which leaders from the earlier colonial period were cast from office or assassinated. When Egypt refused American financial support or an alliance with the United States in the early 1950s, then led by its charismatic president, Nasser, who advocated neutrality between the superpowers but actually aligned with Moscow, Israel became a beneficiary of Egypt's tilt toward the USSR. Increasingly, Washington saw Israel as a stalwart against the spread of communism in the Middle East.

In 1958 fear of communist influences taking hold in Lebanon and Jordan caused the United States to send a small number of US Marines to Beirut. Referring to the US deploying marines there, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles said, "If Israel [were the] victim of unprovoked aggression to destroy it, our response would be just as good as in [the] case of Lebanon" (Little, 1993, p. 566). In 1970, when it appeared that Moscow's Syrian client would endanger the Jordanian regime, President Richard Nixon called

upon Israel to make a public demonstration of military support for Jordan's king Husayn ibn Talal. Arab leaders' political decisions to assert control over their neighbors further alienated American friendships. In 1963 Nasser's bold sorties into Yemen and efforts to unseat moderate Arab leaders in Jordan and Saudi Arabia tarnished America's relationship with Cairo. The Kennedy administration clarified its moral and political commitment to the integrity and well-being of Israel and said it "would come to Israel's assistance if Israel were the victim of aggression" (Little, 1993, p. 572).

The so-called southern-tier alliance of Middle Eastern states—Iran, Iraq, and Turkey—that were geographically appealing from Washington's view to contain Moscow's moves into the Middle East in the 1950s were no longer a valued system, with Tehran and Baghdad completely absent from any Western alliance system. By 2020, Ankara and Washington disagreed on an array of regional strategic issues. Israel and several Arab states were left willing to align with specific American interests such as curbing insurgencies, transnational terrorism, and containing Iran's intention to acquire nuclear weapons capability. And virtually every Arab country ran from the Obama administration's 2015 embrace of engaging Iran's regime in a nuclear production compromise, driving many into the quiet and deepening embrace of Israel.

Warming relations with Israel in the 1950s, while not forsaking Arab allies, were emblematic of what became Washington's even-handed policy toward American friends in the Middle East. The 1967 June war did not change this "even-handedness." Its results caused the United States to give the policy starker and more frequent definition (Stein, 2017; see also the chapter by Tal in this volume). Washington identified with Israel's smashing success over Moscow's Soviet clients. In solidifying Israel's existence, the war gave Israel the option to trade the land it won in the war for peace or security. For the next half century, the United States became the primary mediator seeking agreements between the Israeli and Arab sides. While the United States continued to increase American military and economic aid to Israel to unprecedented levels, it also leaned heavily on Israel to be more forthcoming in negotiations with the Arab side and especially the Palestinians, until the advent of the Trump administration.

In December 1967 Harold Saunders, the Middle East specialist at the US National Security Council, remarked, "We'll make sure Israel has our political support and equipment it needs to defend itself. But we can't tie ourselves to 'fortress' Israel, especially if Israel decides to build nuclear weapons" (Saunders, 1967). Two years later, his longtime colleague in the Department of State, Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Joseph Sisco, said, "Our interests in the Middle East do not center on Israel alone. Our moral and practical commitment to Israel is by no means toward everything Israel wants or does. Let me tell you frankly: If our friendship with Israel is the only thing the United States is left with in the Middle East, that will be a catastrophic setback for American policy [and national] . . . interests in the region" (Rabin, 1979, p. 149).

In December 1975 Henry Kissinger, in a private meeting with Saddun Hammadi, the Iraqi minister of foreign affairs, noted:

We don't need Israel for influence in the Arab world. On the contrary, Israel does us more harm than good in the Arab world. We can't negotiate about the existence of

Israel, but we can reduce its size to historical proportions. . . . So I think in ten to fifteen years, Israel will be like Lebanon—struggling for existence, with no influence in the Arab world. . . . If the issue is the existence of Israel, we can't cooperate. But if the issue is more normal borders, we can cooperate. . . . We want the survival of Israel but not dominating the area. What they want is what you predict—that they be the only friend. We want other friends, to reduce that argument. (Stein, 2006)

In the 1970–1981 period, Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, Kissinger, and Jimmy Carter pushed Israel to make more and faster accommodations than it was prepared to undertake. Each embraced Sadat's eagerness to entrust the keys to diplomatic progress to Washington. Sadat calculated that only the United States, with present and future security guarantees offered to Israel, could loosen Israel's control over sovereign Egyptian Sinai. Capitalizing on Sadat's willingness to move Egypt away from the Soviet Union was an American victory that could not be passed up. As Sadat told Kissinger in January 1974 at the signing of the first Egyptian–Israeli Disengagement Agreement, "We are making this agreement with the United States, not with Israel" (Stein, 1999, p. 51). In the negotiations that flowed from Cairo from 1973 to 1979, Sadat anointed Kissinger and then Carter as "his emissaries" to Israel.

A key sticking point in the US–Israeli relationship since the June 1967 war has been the increase in frequency and in detail that American officials request of Israel to resolve conflict with her neighbors. Jerusalem and Washington possess vastly different views of what is in Israel's national interests and how it should act in protecting itself, particularly in its relationship with Arab and Muslim neighbors (see the chapter by Rabinovich in this volume).

At almost every juncture when Washington has proposed what Israel should do, every Israeli prime minister, regardless of political leaning, has taken into account Washington's positions and inevitably differed over what Israel sees as existential security threats, views that are not shared by Washington. Israeli prime ministers range from prickly to resentful when they view Washington as intruding into what Israel sees as its basic right and sole prerogative: to determine the last word on security matters, more precisely what to do with lands secured in the June 1967 War. Israeli self-determination is the core of the Zionist enterprise that struggled to form a state. It is a nonnegotiable essence of Israel's statehood. Israeli leaders have opposed, criticized, or had major reservations about unilateral statements, plans, and agreements made or supported by American officials or international organizations when those ideas have related to how Israel should dispose of the post–1967 war territories. Examples include the 1969 Rogers Plan; 1982 Reagan Plan; and US abstention from five UN Security Council resolutions since the 1980s whose contents criticized Israel's actions: annexation of land or building of settlements, including Jerusalem.

Added to this are the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, the 2003 Quartet's Road Map, and the August 2015 Iran nuclear understanding. In one classic moment, Prime Minister Menachem Begin, incensed that Israel was being treated like a supplicant client state, reacted to a published report that the United States would be "punishing Israel" for applying Israeli law to the Golan Heights in December 1981. Upon hearing the remark,

Begin summoned US ambassador Samuel W. Lewis and said, “What kind of expression is this—‘punishing Israel’? Are we a vassal state of yours? Are we a banana republic? Are we youths of fourteen who, if they don’t behave properly, are slapped across the fingers?” (Lewis, 2011). Four decades after Ronald Reagan censured Israel for applying Israel law to the Golan Heights, Donald Trump did the opposite. He endorsed Israel’s annexation of the Golan Heights and further suggested that it be Israel’s lone decision about whether to annex portions of the West Bank.

THE RELATIONSHIP: POINT, COUNTERPOINT, STRONGER THAN EVER

Finally, two additional examples illuminate the intricacies of the US–Israeli relationship. One pertains to the Ford administration and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the second to the Obama administration and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, forty years apart. In 1975, when Secretary of State Kissinger wanted Israel to sign a second disengagement with Egypt, Israeli leaders had not yet come to trust Egyptian president Sadat as a nonbelligerent neighbor. Kissinger did. In March 1975 Kissinger berated Rabin and Israel for not being forthcoming with Sadat. He told Rabin, “The Arab leader who banked on the US is discredited” and then threatened Israel with “greater emphasis on the Palestinians.” He continued, “the Soviets will step into the area, we shall not oppose the resumption of a Geneva Conference...that is my nightmare marching to you” (Ford, 1975, p. 560).

Rabin characterized this talk with Kissinger as the “toughest, most emotional, and most painful conversation” the two of them ever had. Subsequently, President Ford announced a “reassessment” of US relations with Israel. Rabin knew that Sadat and Kissinger wanted another agreement. Further, he knew the US–Israeli relationship would not suffer in the short or long term, and particularly that the United States was not about to go to a Middle East conference at which the Soviet Union would be a co-convenor with Washington, especially after Kissinger had diligently squired Sadat away from Moscow. Rabin was a pragmatist who could see beyond the immediate horizon.

Yet “reassessment” took several forms: restriction of arms supplies and suspension of economic assistance and a selective embargo were applied. Ford froze the Israeli request for F-15 fighter planes and delayed the delivery of a promised shipment of Lance surface-to-surface missiles. Kissinger recommended that “every department should put Israeli activities at the bottom of the list” (Kissinger to President Ford, 1975).

Undercutting the Ford–Kissinger tandem was Israel’s overwhelming support from Congress in a letter signed by seventy-six senators calling for undiminished military and economic aid to Israel. The senators wrote, “We trust that your recommendations will be responsive to Israel’s urgent military and economic needs...the US acting it is own national interests, stands firmly with Israel in the search for peace” (Spiegel, 1985, p.

296). Bipartisan support for Israel was strongly expressed, and it greatly angered the administration because congressional and lobbying interests shackled executive branch decision-making.

When Rabin next met with Ford at the White House in June 1975, he told the president that Israel would not return to the pre-1967 borders. Finally, Israel agreed to withdraw from the strategic Sinai passes if the United States agreed to station Americans as civilian observers in Sinai and made other promises to Israel not to negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization unless it renounced terrorism and accepted Israel.

In early September 1975 the second Egyptian–Israeli disengagement agreement was signed. In addition, completely disconnected from the Egyptian–Israeli focus, the United States promised in a secret Ford–Rabin agreement that the “US would give great weight to Israel’s position that any peace agreement with Syria must be predicated on Israel remaining on the Golan Heights” (Stein, 1999, p. 51). In negotiations with Washington, Israel achieved its immediate negotiating objectives, retained its military arms delivery, *and* obtained something more in the Ford promise to Rabin about the Golan Heights.

The heated US–Israeli controversy over the 2015 Iran deal is a second example of both countries pushing their views on the other, of the relationship being full of anger, and of it remaining robust years after what was an extraordinarily harsh encounter. The prelude to the controversy occurred with the change in the Obama administration’s outlook toward Iran. That outlook began as quite harsh, then mellowed, compromising with Tehran to the point that the Israeli prime minister reacted with unrestrained anger. Speaking at the Rabbinical Assembly in Atlanta in May 2012 and in Jerusalem in March 2013, Vice President Joseph Biden and President Barack Obama respectively had noted that Washington’s policy regarding Iran was not “containment.” That is, Iran would not be allowed to gain or retain a nuclear weapon.

In September 2013 the administration softened its view toward Iran when President Obama merely said, “We are determined to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon; we are not seeking regime change and we respect the right of the Iranian people to access peaceful nuclear energy” (Obama, 2013). A heavy sigh of relief could be heard from the Iranian government when the US president promised “no regime change.” The Iranian clerics assumed that meant that the United States would not allow Israel, a close ally, to attack Iran. Israel’s and Iran’s Arab opponents were greatly troubled by this promise; access to peaceful nuclear energy was a bonus for Iran.

Over the next eighteen months the United States and the major powers hammered out an agreement with Tehran wherein the financially burdensome UN and US sanctions on Iran would be removed in exchange for severe limitations on Iran’s access to nuclear weapons production. While the agreement was negotiated, optics in the bilateral public relationship soured as much as they had anytime previously between the United States and Israel, including during the waning days of the Carter administration, when Prime Minister Begin had made it clear to anyone who wanted to listen that Jimmy Carter should not be re-elected for a second term as president. Relations between Obama and Netanyahu became outright surly during the last eighteen months of the

Obama administration. At the end of February 2015, over the matter of the Obama administration designing an agreement with Iran, the country most able and willing to pose an existential threat to Israel, Israeli prime minister Netanyahu accused the United States of “giving up” on stopping Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

National Security Advisor Susan Rice responded by proclaiming that Netanyahu’s coming visit to the United States, at the invitation of the Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives, which included an address to a joint session of Congress, was “destructive of the [bi-partisan] fabric of the [US–Israel] relationship” (Rice, 2015). The most discomforting peak in the Obama–Netanyahu scuffle was Netanyahu’s acceptance of the Republican House Speaker’s invitation to address Congress on the Iran issue. Netanyahu’s forty-minute speech against the deal being negotiated was as intrusive an act into American politics as any undertaken previously by a prime minister of Israel on behalf of the defense of Israel’s national interests. For its part, the Obama administration worked diligently but failed to have Netanyahu’s March 2015 re-election bid miscarry. Friendly analysts of the relationship on all sides estimated that the president and prime minister’s sullen unfriendliness had reached a historic low point that threatened to put the Washington–Israeli relationship into an irretrievable deep freeze, similar to but expected to be much longer than the Ford “reassessment” in 1975.

Many pro-Israel American Jewish leaders, Democrats and Republicans among them, expressed deep anger at the Israeli prime minister for coming to Congress and opposing a sitting US president. (This was the fifth time an Israeli prime minister had addressed a joint session of Congress, a record for prime ministers or heads of state addressing joint sessions since World War II.) In July 2015 the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed between Iran on the one hand and China, France, Germany, Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the EU on the other. It was reinforced by a UN Security Council resolution. In September 2016, the Obama administration finalized a ten-year \$38 billion military aid package for Israel. In the last ten days of December 2016, the Obama administration pummeled Israel at the United Nations about its wrongful handling of the occupied territories just three months after providing Israel with security needs. On December 23 UN Security Council Resolution 2334 was passed. It labeled Jerusalem as occupied territory, the equivalent of throwing acid into the Israeli leadership’s eyes. The American ambassador to the UN abstained, allowing it to pass. Five days later, showing his anger toward Netanyahu, Secretary of State John Kerry delivered a blistering attack on Israeli policies (United Nations, 2016a, 2016b). It was as detailed a criticism of Israel as perhaps has ever been made by a US secretary of state. The prolonged and extraordinarily angry tiff between Netanyahu and Obama abruptly ended when the latter left office. And when Obama left office, two highly respected analysts, Amos Harel and Shai Feldman, praised his administration for bringing the two countries’ defense relations to a level of cooperation and intimacy not previously seen (Feldman & Harel, 2017).

In May 2018, President Donald Trump announced US withdrawal from the JCPOA Iran nuclear deal and threatened to impose punishing sanctions on Iran for its belligerent actions in the Persian Gulf. Trump, contrary to every previous president, moved his administration enormously closer to the views of Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu and

many of his predecessors: he moved the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Israel's capital, Jerusalem; sanctioned Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights; and said that Israel would have the United States' blessing if it decided to annex portions of the West Bank as suggested in Trump's January 2020 Peace Plan and in remarks by Secretary of State Pompeo.

Israel did not annex portions of the West Bank, in fact it exchanged a promise not to annex those lands for the August 13, 2020 promise by the United Arab Emirates to recognize Israel. The Trump administration crowed its support of the UAE-Israel agreement, hoping to convey to the American electorate, especially evangelical Christians and supporters of Israel that his administration's support of Israel is like none other yesterday or tomorrow. Once again, as in previous presidential elections, attitudes towards Israel held by American presidential candidates aim directly at currying favor with the electorate, especially in swing states like Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Nevada, and Florida. It is much too early to tell if there are significant long-term implications for the strength and viability of the US-Israeli relationship when two US presidents within three years of each other articulate and apply such dramatically polar positions on matters not related to Israel's security assistance. What we know is that Israel will oppose vehemently American policy suggestions that it views as Washington defining or imposing requirements on Israel that it sees as dangerous to its national security interests. On the other hand, Israeli governments will eagerly embrace US policy announcements that align with views held by a majority of Israelis. Israel will certainly not claim in those instances, like Menachem Begin to Sam Lewis in 1981, that Ronald Reagan was treating Israel like a "banana republic." As a matter of influencing policy, Israel will need to be sure that it does not embrace only the occupant of the Oval Office to the lack of attention on members of Congress, both Senate and House, and with the American people.

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CHAPTER 29

ISRAEL'S GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

COLIN SHINDLER

THE Zionist movement that brought about a state of the Jews in 1948 was unique. It went against the grain of history, it did not fit into any theoretical template that characterized other emerging nations, and it was often depicted as an ideological aberration that went against the zeitgeist of the contemporary period. The idea that Zionism was different rather than wrong may have resonated in the Jewish psyche, but it fell on deaf ears in the Arab, Muslim, and developing worlds.

These differing interpretations led to both military conflict with the Arab world and diplomatic isolation within the international community. Yet the establishment of Israel was seen by a majority of Jews as a rare opportunity to push back the millennial imperative of persecution and liquidation because they did not adhere to the religious and national norms of the non-Jewish majority. While Israel wished to build an egalitarian, social democratic society, a member of the community of nations, in 1948 it simultaneously encountered the maelstrom of global national interests, often veiled as ideologically driven. The desire for normalization was deep for the Israelis. For the Arab world, on the other hand, there was a profound determination not to allow this to happen and for Israel to be characterized as a pariah state.

This desire for normalization, stability, and survival colored Israel's relationships with other nations in the world. Yet the national interests of such nations varied widely. Their relationships with Israel were governed by a wide variety of different needs and often defined by individual circumstances that have not remained static over the past seven decades.

When the United Nations was established after the end of World War II, it boasted fifty-one original members. By 1948 the UN had only added another seven members. This number virtually quadrupled over the next seventy years, due in part to both decolonization in Africa and Asia after Indian independence in 1947 and the collapse of communism in Europe after 1991. This increase was the consequence of the disintegration of colonial empires and multistate federations.

Israel's global perspective has therefore become more complex because of the sheer number of new states in the world. The societies of these new states have been

characterized by the advance of technology and the electronic age, which crosses borders without restrictions. Moreover, many of these new states have adhered to a common mentality and world outlook: the bloc of the decolonized.

While it is self-evident that many levels of relationship, such as diplomatic, cultural, and economic, exist in general between states, a fundamental interest for any country is to ensure its national survival and to prevent any breach of security. Self-defense, bolstered by arms supplies and sometimes by alliances with more powerful countries, is an ongoing concern at the heart of government. The Baltic states, for example, historically sandwiched in between Germany and Russia, regarded their existence as sovereign states as precarious. For Israel, its reductionist albeit realistic appraisal of its international isolation cemented vigilance. This was accentuated as well by memories of past insecurity, of the Jewish historical experience.

Historically the Jews saw themselves as selected for tasks set by God, appointees who did not think of themselves as any better or any worse than other nations. This biblical designation of spiritual isolation was accentuated by the political marginalization of the Jews by empires and religions, especially after the formal loss of national sovereignty in the futile wars against the Romans. Biblical liturgy enforced this sense of separation.

This idea of “a people that dwells alone” was also often imposed from the outside. The Jews down the millennia learned to live with it. The Zionist movement inherited this perception when it restructured the image of the Jews as a dispersed nation-state in the aftermath of the French Revolution and in the context of both the European and Jewish Enlightenments. The aim of the early Zionists was to break out of their isolation and move from the margins to the center of history.

The Zionist Left in particular reflected the tension between particularism and universalism within Judaism and Jewish tradition. After all, the Balfour Declaration and the October Revolution occurred within days of each other in 1917. One promoted particularism, the other universalism. The dilemma of which path to follow characterized the Zionist Left during the twentieth century.

Part of the Zionist Right also looked to the past. After all, the Jewish Legion that saw service in the Middle East in 1918 was based on the model of the international armies of the first French republic that fought to defend the Revolution. The Jewish Legion possessed an internationalist pedigree in a nationalist cause.

The genocide perpetrated by the Nazis, the abandonment of internationalism by the Soviet Union, and the hostility of Arab nationalism moved Zionism toward a position more concerned with national survival than with repairing the world.

BEFORE 1948

The Zionist movement's global outlook before 1948 was broadly limited to

1. support for an international charter supporting Zionist aspirations,
2. learning lessons from other liberation struggles,

3. canvassing support within Great Britain,
4. mobilizing support within Diasporic Jewish communities,
5. developing support within the United States,
6. securing military training and arms.

Theodor Herzl's attempts to garner support from the Ottomans, Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany, and the British were of limited success, but they did lay the foundation for the Balfour Declaration, which promised the Jews "a home" within Palestine. One factor in persuading the British government to issue it was the fear that both its German enemy and its French ally would eagerly fill the gap in facilitating Jewish national aspirations if the British exited. Moreover, the idea of British hegemony over Palestine fulfilled a Protestant desire stretching back to Oliver Cromwell's English republic.

Zionism was a latecomer to the club of liberation movements. Due to its uniquely dispersed situation, it had evolved from the backdrop of biblical culture and early nineteenth-century European nationalism. However, by the time Zionism actually appeared on the public stage, European nationalism had ostensibly moved from the Left to the Right: from the struggle of the Irish against Britain in 1798 to the imperialism of the Belgians in the Congo a hundred years later. Zionism was therefore a displaced, progressive European nationalism that arose during an epoch of imperialism and colonialism.

Vladimir Zé'ev Jabotinsky in particular looked back to an age of romantic nationalism. He was regarded by many as a liberal nationalist, a man of the 1848 revolutions and a follower of Garibaldi, Mazzini, and Cavour. David Ben-Gurion, his ideological adversary, was also influenced by the uprisings of the nineteenth century. Like Jabotinsky, he looked back to the French Revolution, but to Robespierre and Danton rather than to Mirabeau. Ben-Gurion's Jacobinism proposed a different ideological pathway through the nineteenth century, leading toward revolutionary activity in the tsarist empire. For many of Ben-Gurion's generation—the generation of the second *aliyah*—building socialism in fin-de-siècle Palestine simply represented the Zionist wing of this broad revolutionary movement in eastern Europe.

Following his emigration in 1906, Ben-Gurion discovered that underdeveloped Palestine was not Russia. Entirely different social and economic conditions prevailed. The emergence of the Jewish national movement also coincided with the rise of Arab nationalism, both with claims to the same territory. Unlike the Zionists, Arab anticolonialist movements preferred nationalism and Islamism to socialism. The Arab middle class in Palestine was exceedingly small. Attempts to forge a common future floundered despite the good intentions of small groups on both sides. The Tarpat disturbances of 1929 and the Arab Revolt of 1936–1939 polarized an already tense relationship. It structured and molded the Zionist Jewish and Palestinian Arab national movements as separate entities.

In an age of imperialism, the leadership of the Yishuv concluded that it could only develop under the protection of a great power. This was provided by the British between 1920 and 1948. Apart from a short period in 1945–1946, Ben-Gurion was careful not to

oppose the British militarily, whereas nationalists in the Irgun and Lehi espoused such a conflict. Menachem Begin understood this in terms of the uprisings of the Americans and the Irish against the British and the Poles against Russia. This was similarly reflected by the determination of Palestinian Arab nationalists to oust the British, but as an anti-colonialist movement, emanating from the developing world.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Zionism was therefore seen through a different prism by nascent local anticolonial movements, compared to the view of anti-fascism held by the European Left. Zionism did not conform to the theoretical model of national liberation, whereas the Palestinian Arab movement did. It was easier for post-colonial independent states to identify with the Palestinian Arabs because their experience was similar.

European socialist parties—which opposed imperialism and wished to grant independence to the colonized—differed in perceptions and goals from those they were actually campaigning for. The primary focus of post–World War II European socialists was on making their own countries better places by ridding them of the colonialist yoke, rather than on understanding the minutiae of the political constellations and internal conflicts within the colonies themselves. They possessed the stigma of being part and parcel of the same nation as the oppressor.

Finally, many Jews in European parties on the Left were regarded as comrades in the struggle for social justice. After 1945 and the revelations about the Shoah, the Left in Western Europe broadly aligned itself more with the Zionist Jews than with the Palestinian Arabs. This manifested itself in the recognition that legitimate claims were being made to the same territory by both national movements. The solution in 1947 was therefore logically partition. The European Left broadly welcomed a two-state solution, whereas the colonized who were following an anti-imperialist strategy desired a unitary Arab country.

ISRAEL AND DECOLONIZATION

The era of decolonization after World War II sowed the seeds of a nonaligned bloc of emerging independent states, seemingly outside of the superpowers and their influence. Moshe Sharett, the first minister of foreign affairs of Israel, signified his wish that this might be the best path for the new state to tread. However, when Israel attempted to participate in the work of an embryonic bloc of the nonaligned, the more numerous Arab and Muslim states threatened to boycott any conference.

By 1950, with Stalin instigating yet another reversal of Soviet policy amid rampant anti-Semitism in the USSR, Ben-Gurion began to align Israel with the United States (see the chapter by Stein in this volume). Sharett as foreign minister attempted in vain to salvage his attempts at achieving nonalignment.

Even when Israel was represented at a conference, an internal boycott was often implemented. At the first Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon in January 1953, the Egyptian delegate refused to sit at the same table as the Israeli delegate.

Other states sided with Arab demands for different reasons. Pakistan needed fellow Muslims' support for its ongoing struggle against India (Brecher, 1968, p. 52), while China had aspirations to lead the developing world (Kimche, 1973, p. 67).

The founding conference of the nonaligned nations at Bandung in April 1955 cemented this approach. Gamal Abdel Nasser was a senior partner in this venture, along with Jawaharlal Nehru and Josip Broz Tito, and vetoed any Israeli presence. It therefore did not matter that Israel was seen as "progressive" in the wider world, because the pan-Arab imperative was nationalist driven, and feudal Arab states were invited.

Yet Israel continued to merge a social democratic commitment to the developing world with vested national interests in cultivating newly emergent states. In 1956 alone Sharett visited twelve Asian states (Sharett, 1957). In part Israeli policy was based on the desire to forge alliances with non-Arab states beyond the confrontation lines. This included Muslim states such as Turkey and Iran; Arab states such as Morocco and Oman; and minority ethnic groups such the Kurds and the Berbers as well as those defined religiously such as the Maronites. The *raison d'être* for the cultivation of the newly independent countries of Africa and Asia was in part idealism, in part realism. In Israel, this was known as *torat haperipharia*, the doctrine of the periphery (Alpher, 2015, pp. 3–10).

In early 1958 Golda Meir visited five African countries, and her foreign ministry opened a special department—the Division for International Cooperation—to facilitate her approach. By 1962 Israel had established twenty-two embassies on a continent emerging from colonial rule. Many of these emergent countries had been British colonies, and the ties between the British Labour movement and the Histadrut in Tel Aviv facilitated a close bond with African countries (Peters, 1992, pp. 2–5).

In part the Israeli drive was conditioned by conflict with much of the Arab world. Israel therefore helped Christian Ethiopia suppress a Muslim Eritrean secessionist movement. It later helped Anyanya rebels in South Sudan against the Arab north of Gaafar Numeiri. While predominantly Muslim states such as Somalia and Mauritania certainly rejected Israeli advances and aligned themselves with the Arab world, Israel signed twenty-four aid agreements with Mali, whose population was 90 percent Muslim.

Yet Israel's aid program also led it to supply military assistance to undemocratic and authoritarian regimes. It reflected the turf war between Israel's foreign ministry, which wished to project a social democratic imperative by extending civilian aid, and its defense establishment, which wished to export war materiel. Moshe Dayan symbolized the approach of the latter. He commented that "small nations do not have a foreign policy, they have a defence policy" (Klieman, 1985, p. 29; see also the chapter by Freilich in this volume).

Arms sales helped the economy and facilitated diplomacy. After the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel sold arms to the tune of \$1.7 million in 1968 (Levey, 2008, p. 214). The logic was based on the knowledge that if Israel refrained from providing arms, then its place would be taken by Nasser's Egypt or a member of the Soviet bloc. Israel trained Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko and Uganda's Idi Amin in the 1960s. Jean-Bédél Bokassa of the Central African Republic, who later exhibited Napoleonic tendencies as Emperor Bokassa I, was similarly trained by Israel.

THE KREMLIN'S ANTAGONISM

The post-Stalinist Soviet Union began cultivating nationalists in Egypt and Syria in the mid-1950s and even made overtures to feudal Saudi Arabia. The USSR supported the building of the Aswan Dam and was willing to provide arms via Czechoslovakia to Egypt. Despite this, Israel comprehensively defeated the military forces of Egypt and Syria in 1967; this was both unexpected and humiliating (see the chapter by Tal in this volume).

The Kremlin leadership, however, was divided on how to respond to Israel's victory in 1967. As defeat loomed during the war, Soviet naval forces were ordered to prepare for a landing on the Israeli coast—an order that was later rescinded (Laron, 2017, p. 303). The compromise between the competing factions in the Soviet leadership was the breaking off of diplomatic relations between the Warsaw Pact countries—with the exception of Nicolae Ceaușescu's Romania—and Israel. This was the price of averting military action in the Middle East. This unprecedented cutting of ties took place even before the end of the war and was designed in part to strengthen Arab resolve. It was followed by a vituperative campaign in the Soviet press, which often exuded anti-Semitic innuendo.

Addressing graduates of military academies at a Kremlin reception a few weeks after the war's end, Brezhnev told them that Israel was imitating “the crimes of the Hitlerite aggressors” in its treatment of “the peaceful Arab population” (*Pravda*, July 6, 1967; quoted in Rubinstein, 1988).

The arms lost by both Egypt and Syria were quickly replaced by Moscow—and renewed attempts were made to bring the Arab world closer into the Soviet orbit. The rout of Nasser's forces in Sinai was depicted as a victory for the forces of neocolonialism and a defeat for the developing world. Approximately half the members of the United Nations were now new Afro-Asian states. Together with the Soviet bloc and the Arab states, they constituted a formidable group. Soviet political influence, growing Arab economic power, and an easy identification with nascent Palestinian nationalism as a fellow liberation movement persuaded many African countries to move away from Israel toward the Arab world. This move was initiated even before the settlement drive on the West Bank.

The rise of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the establishment of the first West Bank settlements accelerated the estrangement between Israel and the developing world (see the chapter by Sela in this volume).

Unlike the East Europeans, Cuba maintained its diplomatic relations with Israel after 1967. Before Castro's turn toward Soviet communism in the early 1960s—in reaction to American hostility—Cuban Jews had sympathized with the overthrow of Fulgencio Batista in 1959. When Cuba formally turned to communism, there was an exodus of a majority of its Jewish population, yet there was no anti-Semitism, as in Eastern Europe. Even so, repeated Cuban condemnations of Israel after 1967 reflected the Kremlin's determination to isolate Israel from the developing world.

The Israeli victory in the Six-Day War was a catastrophe for the Arab world. Its influence in Africa at that point was limited. Only Guinea under Sékou Touré, with its brand of African socialism, followed the lead of the Soviet Union and broke diplomatic ties with Israel.

While African states could relate to the evolving Palestinian national movement and opposed the settlement drive on the West Bank, their criticism extended solely to successive Israel governments, and unlike many Arab states, not to Israel *per se*. They did not succumb to Arab demands to expel Israel from the United Nations, like South Africa.

AFTER 1973

Arab influence was reflected in the increasingly radical approach projected by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) after 1967. This was further reflected in the support of seemingly friendly African states for hard-line resolutions at the conference of the nonaligned in Algiers at the beginning of September 1973. Moreover, several African states, such as Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Niger, were nominally Muslim or like Nigeria possessed a large Muslim population. Radical Arab states such as Muammar Gaddafi's Libya assiduously cultivated newly independent African states through generous economic aid. Arab pressure came to fruition when six African states, led by Amin's Uganda, broke off diplomatic relations with Israel between March 1972 and May 1973, before the Yom Kippur War.

The war—a virtual draw—allowed the ascendant Arab states to increase their pressure on often economically vulnerable African states. This was accentuated by the declaration of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) in October 1973 that it would increase the price of oil by 70 percent.

With the war going against Egypt, Anwar Sadat called for a further ban on oil exports to the United States. Iraq, Syria, and Libya called for the nationalization of US oil companies in the Middle East. This resulted in a reduction of 10 percent in oil exports by the major oil exporters. When President Richard Nixon then asked Congress to grant \$2.2 billion in military assistance to Israel, the Arab states declared an embargo on oil exports to the United States. This cutback in production particularly affected Europe and Japan. In all these moves, the Soviet Union was a powerful advocate in applying pressure (Painter, 2013, pp. 173–178).

Since the Arab states had the backing of the USSR, the Warsaw Pact bloc, and China, Israel was unable to compete or to effect any reversal of this trend. On occasion, some African states utilized Arab pressure to push Israel to provide more aid. The president of Gabon, Omar Bongo, told the Israeli ambassador on the eve of the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War that “Israel, with all its Rothschilds, could afford to do more” (Levey, 2008, p. 217).

During and after the Yom Kippur War at the end of 1973, another twenty-one African states, including Gabon, broke off diplomatic ties with Israel. Only Lesotho—where

Libya supported an armed rebellion—Swaziland, Mauritius, and Malawi maintained diplomatic relations with Israel. And Mauritius broke off diplomatic relations in June 1976, after Operation Entebbe.

The decline of the doctrine of the periphery in its original form became all too evident after 1973. The Kurds had not risen in revolt to divert Iraqi attention away from the war. Morocco had sent a division to fight alongside other Arab forces on the Golan Heights. The Shah of Iran joined the oil embargo against Israel and the West (Alpher, 2015, p. 71). In Ethiopia, Haile Selassie was deposed in a military coup by Mengistu Haile-Mariam, and a Marxist-Leninist regime was instituted.

The defection of virtually all the African states meant in essence an end to the aid program. Israeli advisers were gradually recalled, short-term projects were curtailed, and the number of African trainees studying and working in Israel was dramatically reduced.

Asia had always been a different story as far as diplomatic ties with Israel were concerned. Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia had always rejected Israel's advances because they were devoutly Muslim states whose allegiance was to the Palestinians. Sri Lanka under Sirimavo Bandaranaike formed an alliance with the local communists and moved toward the nonaligned movement. It broke off diplomatic relations with Israel in 1970.

Non-Muslim states such as Japan, Nepal, Thailand, and Burma did maintain ties with Israel—as did the Catholic Philippines. However, in the 1970s there were military victories for the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the Vietcong in Vietnam, and the Pathet Lao in Laos, all of which defined themselves as Marxist-Leninist and were nominally aligned with the Soviet Union. They too severed relations with Israel.

Support for the “Zionism is racism” resolution at the United Nations in 1975 was symbolic of this diplomatic isolation. It propelled Israel to consider cementing its relationship with apartheid South Africa.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONNECTION

Israel had followed an anti-apartheid policy since the mid-1950s, but its relationship with South Africa deteriorated dramatically in the 1960s. The Sharpeville Massacre had taken place in March 1960, and South Africa's declaration as a republic, exiting the British Commonwealth in May 1961, further focused international attention on the apartheid system. A crucial factor was that eighteen African states had joined the United Nations in the autumn of 1960, which expanded the African bloc of nations.

In October 1961 Eric Louw, the foreign minister of South Africa, gave a speech at the United Nations that defended “separate development” and clearly incensed the African delegates, who moved a motion stating that the speech should be struck from the official record. The motion failed because it did not obtain the required two-thirds

majority. Loew's statement was described as "offensive, fictitious and erroneous"—and Israel voted with the Afro-Asian bloc. The Europeans—apart from Holland—and the North Americans, together with their allies, either abstained or absented themselves from the vote.

The South African government and Afrikaner press were highly critical of Israel's conduct.

Both Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir promoted this policy of choosing black Africa in preference to white South Africa. The Israeli Left was delighted, but the Right and the religious—while abhorring apartheid—argued that it was not in Israel's national interest to oppose in preference to abstaining. Begin's Herut had supported France over the FLN (National Liberation Front) in Algeria for similar reasons.

Nevertheless, Meir even considered stopping El Al flights to South Africa (Shimoni, 1980, p. 320). In an address to the Knesset in November 1961, Ben-Gurion spoke about "the moral imperatives of Judaism" that did not allow Israel to compromise its view on apartheid (Brecher, 1972, p. 235). Both Ben-Gurion and Meir invoked the biblical belief that Israel should be "a light unto the nations." In 1963 Meir told the Knesset that Israel was playing an active role in "the restoration of human and national dignity to once downtrodden peoples in Africa" (Brecher, 1972, p. 244).

Even so, Ben-Gurion and Meir believed that while opposing apartheid, Israel should tread lightly so as not to overtly offend the South African government. Israel did not favor the expulsion of South Africa from the United Nations.

In a further vote in the UN Special Political Committee, a recommendation that the General Assembly invoke diplomatic and economic sanctions against South Africa failed to obtain the requisite two-thirds majority—yet once more Israel supported the move.

Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd of South Africa this time responded to Israeli policy by replying to a letter from a South African Jew, arguing that while Israel similarly followed an approach of "separate development," now it was clearly following "a selfish policy."

Significantly, both Verwoerd and Loew had a checkered history when it came to attitudes toward Jews. In the 1930s many of the leaders of Afrikanerdom had been opposed to Jewish immigration into South Africa, and some had been members of the Greyshirts. Many Afrikaner nationalists regarded World War II as a "Jewish imperialist war." Their parliamentary representatives proposed that South Africa should remain neutral. The vote was lost by the narrow margin of thirteen votes.

Now with Verwoerd as prime minister and Loew as foreign minister, some South African Jews feared reprisals over Israel's policy at the United Nations. Ben-Gurion, however, believed that the opposite was true, that there was little danger to South African Jewry—except embarrassment. He argued that Israel's "vital interests" came first.

Verwoerd's government responded by stopping the transfer of goods and funds to Israel. The South African Treasury had previously been amenable and flexible with regard to such arrangements. This restriction was only lifted after the Six-Day War.

ISRAEL'S ISOLATION AND PARIAH STATES

By 1974 there was still little affection between apartheid South Africa and Israel. Yet Meir's policy toward the newly emergent African states had not prevented a mass defection of African states after the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Arab economic pressure proved far more important than an appreciation of social democratic ideals.

Israel's economic isolation was resolved by an expansion of the industrial-military complex. Arms would be sold to anyone who paid for them. This included apartheid South Africa, Augusto Pinochet's Chile, and the anti-Semitic junta that took over Argentina in 1976.

The second Begin government was prepared to supply Barak, Gabriel, and Shafrir missile systems and Skyhawk fighters to the Argentinian junta during the Falklands conflict, thus challenging the West's embargo. Muslim states such as Indonesia and Malaysia received Israeli arms, as did the Iran of the ayatollahs during its long war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq (Klieman, 1985, pp. 149–166).

Israel's turning away from the developing world meant distancing itself from the universalism in both Judaic and socialist traditions. It also widened the gap between Israelis and Diaspora Jews, who lived among non-Jews and were concerned about injustice in the wider world. The resignation of Meir in 1974, the death of Pinhas Sapir, and the sidelining of Abba Eban brought to power in their stead two "realists": Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres. Rabin did not share Meir's sense of obligation to black Africa, while Peres was a disciple of the arch-pragmatist Ben-Gurion.

Immediately after the Yom Kippur War, both Israel and South Africa were feeling increasingly isolated. In November 1974 Peres paid a secret visit to Pretoria and offered to sell Jericho missiles to the South Africans. Although the sale never materialized, it did mark the start of a close military relationship between Zionist Israel and apartheid South Africa—a relationship that was strengthened when Begin's Likud Party was elected in 1977. Unlike the Labor Party, Likud placed national interests above any universalist concerns and did not express any qualms about dealing with Pretoria (Poliakow-Suransky, 2010, pp. 80–84).

The South African prime minister, B. J. Vorster, had already paid a visit to Israel in 1976 seeking weapons. South Africa supplied Israel with yellowcake uranium, while Israel provided the isotope of hydrogen, tritium—an ingredient for improving the thermonuclear power of missiles (Poliakow-Suransky, 2010, p. 175).

Israel updated South Africa's fleet of Mirage jets, while South Africa provided the space in which Israel could test its missiles unnoticed. On the other hand, the writing was on the wall for South Africa.

This policy of mutual convenience came crashing down when the US Congress passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in September 1986, which stipulated that any country that violated the embargo could be penalized by the withdrawal of

military assistance (Poliakow-Suransky, 2010, pp. 195–197). In addition, American Jews—a liberal community that had been at the forefront of the civil rights movement—were growing more antagonistic toward Israeli indifference to apartheid. Shamir read the runes and began to cut back on Israel's ties to South Africa. The end of the Cold War and the release of Nelson Mandela from prison ensured that Israel's sense of realpolitik had placed it on the wrong side of history by 1991.

THE END OF THE COLD WAR

The abandonment of South Africa's nuclear program and the acceptance of the rule of the black majority indicated that the tacit alliance with Israel was at an end. Mandela's accession to power meant that there was now no necessity to fight foreign wars and no need to acquire arms and the knowledge of how to use them. Diplomatic relations between Israel and the new South Africa were publicly cool. In the first flush of victory, the African National Congress courted those who had supported it throughout the years of struggle. While the Rabin government, elected in 1992, was less enamored of the South African connection than its Likud predecessor had been, Israel paid the price for its fellow-traveling with the apartheid regime.

The economic disintegration and the eventual collapse of the USSR in 1991 deeply affected many countries: those formally communist and those in the nonaligned movement, which although independent had more often looked to Moscow than to Washington.

Ultimately the power of nationalism proved stronger than the appeal of workers' international solidarity. Eastern Europe finally emerged as a plethora of sovereign states after 1989. The Ukraine emerged as an independent nation-state after hundreds of years of tsarist domination. Federal states such as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia broke into their component parts. Many new states, such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, emerged in Central Asia.

Formally communist states such as Cuba and Ethiopia reacted to this new situation by becoming much less interested in Marxism-Leninism. Whereas Mengistu was overthrown and fled to Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe, Cuba attempted to maintain its own independent socialist path, albeit free of Soviet dependency and interference. Castro now promoted José Martí over Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. The absence of Soviet energy sources persuaded Castro to buy bicycles instead of cars and to approach Deng Xiaoping's China for assistance.

Tourism was expanded to offset the effects of the US embargo against Cuba and included an influx of Israeli and Jewish visitors. Although diplomatic relations with Israel were not restored, the Jewish Agency quietly entered into an agreement with the Cuban government to facilitate immigration to Israel. A special office was opened in the Canadian embassy in Havana to deal with requests for emigration to Israel.

In 1993 the Israeli BM Corporation, headed by the former Mossad chief Rafi Eitan, signed an agreement with the Cuban National Citrus Corporation. It resulted in the Israeli management of a 115,000-acre citrus operation in Jaguey Grande.

The building of the Miramar Trade Centre in Havana was another Israeli venture. All of this was taking place while the official face of Israel was siding with the United States in supporting the embargo against Cuba at the United Nations (Shindler, 2016)

INDIA, CHINA, AND JAPAN

The collapse of the USSR also affected India, an important actor in the nonaligned movement. India, whose relationship with Israel had been cool—at least publicly—was now forced to approach both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to stay afloat financially.

India had actually recognized Israel as far back as September 1950 but had not established diplomatic ties in a conventional sense despite there being an Israeli consulate in Mumbai.

India had to take into consideration its Muslim population and the reaction of Pakistan to any move that it might make. Traditionally both Congress and the Muslim League had competed for the allegiance of Indian Muslims. Indian foreign policy was therefore publicly pro-Arab.

The founding conference of the nonaligned movement at Bandung in 1955 proved to be a test case for India. Nehru was forced to choose between a multiplicity of Arab states and Israel; he had no choice but to side with the Arab world in order to create a third way between the two superpowers. Even so, Israel provided military assistance and war materiel in India's conflicts with China (1962) and Pakistan (1965).

India proclaimed itself to be pro-Palestinian, but it crucially acknowledged Israel's right to national self-determination. India nevertheless was critical of Israeli actions during the wars of 1967 and 1973, opposed the settlement drive on the West Bank, and voted for the "Zionism is racism" resolution at the United Nations in 1975.

It was not simply the fall of the Soviet Union and its economic plight that propelled India to formally establish full diplomatic relations with Israel in January 1992. The First Gulf War and the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 were highly influential in changing Indian policy after forty years. Since the Palestinians were part of the Jordanian delegation and as PLO observers were present in Madrid, there was no serious rationale for Indian participation in Israel's isolation.

China, like India, also established diplomatic relations with Israel for similar reasons in early 1992. Israel had actually been the first Middle Eastern state to recognize Mao's China, in January 1950. Mao had argued in 1919 that nothing would come of the Zionist project "because it is of no great concern to the Allied powers" (Schram, 1992, p. 337). Israel did not push for diplomatic ties after recognition and bowed to American pressure because of the onset of the Korean War in 1950. By the time Israel understood the full importance of Israeli-Chinese ties, the Bandung conference was

under way, and the Chinese were moving to cement their position in the emerging developing world. China had established diplomatic relations instead with Nasser's Egypt.

By the 1960s, the Sino-Soviet split and the outbreak of the Vietnam War were influencing China's policies. Conditioned by the radicalism of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s, China deepened its relationship with the developing world. Beijing became an early forger of relations with the PLO and a strong supporter of the Palestinian cause. On the other hand, from China's point of view, Tel Aviv played a major role in preventing the advance of Soviet expansionism.

With the death of Mao in 1976, China reverted to a less strident ideological standpoint. The period of the late 1970s also coincided with China's need for arms and an impetus to review its military capability. Leaders of Israel's defense industry paid a clandestine visit to Beijing in 1979.

The coincidence of the end of the Cold War in 1990 with the thawing of Israel-Palestinian relations—the prelude to the Oslo Accords—affected nations in the Far East such as Japan and South Korea, whose business communities had pursued a rigid boycott of Israel.

In 1952, two weeks after the end of the occupation of Japan by the Allies, Japan had established diplomatic relations with Israel. However, Japan's extensive trade with the Arab world and its dependence on oil produced an almost fundamental obedience to the demands of the Arab League. El Al was refused landing rights, Japanese ships did not dock at Israeli ports, and no Japanese bank opened a branch in Tel Aviv. The boycotters included household names such as Canon, Casio, Honda, Suzuki, Toshiba, and Toyota (Goldstein, 2014, pp. 241–242).

In 1973 OAPEC attempted to persuade Japan to follow the same path as Africa and break off diplomatic relations with Israel. Despite a tremendous increase in the price of oil, the Japanese government refused and instead issued a statement critical of Israeli policy in the West Bank. It also abstained from the “Zionism is racism” vote at the United Nations in 1975. It was only after the handshake between Rabin and Arafat in September 1993 that Japan began to follow a similar approach to that of the West toward Israel.

TURKEY AND GREECE

The hostility between Muslim Turkey and Christian Greece also overshadowed their respective relations with Israel. Kemalist Turkey, with its dominant military, had always been a strategic friend on the periphery of the Arab world. Greece, on the other hand, feared for the numerous Greek communities in the Arab world. Nasser had deported many Greeks from Egypt. The wholesale expulsion of the Greeks—the remnant of the Byzantine Empire—from Turkey in the 1920s and the traumatic exchange of populations resonated with the historical experience of the Jews. Greece only established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1990, again a reflection of the warming of relations between Israelis and Palestinians.

It was the rise of the Islamist AKP (Justice and Development Party) under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and their pursuit of revivalist Ottomanism that was the catalyst for a change in relations between Turkey and Israel. Erdoğan's increasingly acerbic pronouncements, together with his marginalization of the army and oppression of critics, certainly worried Greece and the Balkan states, Christian states with long memories of Ottoman domination. This was accentuated by Erdoğan's draconian reaction to the attempted coup in 2016. In May 2018, Ankara expelled the Israeli Ambassador to Turkey and withdrew its envoy to Tel Aviv, following the killing of Hamas demonstrators on the Gaza-Israel crossings and the Trump White House's decision to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem.⁷

While relations with Israel publicly seemed to flounder under Erdoğan, it was the boarding of the *Mavi Marmara*—part of the “Gaza Freedom Flotilla”—by Israeli commandos in 2010, resulting in the deaths of nine Turks, that threatened to completely wreck Israeli-Turkish relations. Benjamin Netanyahu formally apologized three years later.

Erdoğan's initial friendship with Syria's Assad, then his switch to supporting the Syrian opposition at the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2010, brought him into conflict with Iran. In Israel, this coincided with growing sympathy for the Kurds and a desire not to airbrush the Armenian genocide during World War I out of public memory. All this strengthened Israeli-Greek relations, which manifested in Israeli assistance in oil and gas exploration off the coast of Cyprus. A 2,000-kilometer pipeline will link the Tamar and Leviathan gas fields off the coast of Israel with Cyprus and Greece at an estimated cost of up to \$6.4 billion (Reuters and *Ha'aretz*, April 3, 2017). This in turn may well be an inducement for Erdoğan to move closer to Israel, as Turkey is dependent on Russia, Iran, and Iraq for its oil and gas imports.

TOWARD 2020S

Israel's global perspective has continued to be governed by survivalism and the need for stability and security. Its actions have been repeatedly condemned in international fora by the Arab, Islamic, and developing worlds, while the North Americans and Europeans have either supported Israel or abstained from comment.

Bolivia and Venezuela, both left-wing Latin American states, severed diplomatic ties with Israel after Operation Cast Lead in 2009. Nicaragua did the same after the storming of the *Mavi Marmara* in 2010. The State of Palestine was recognized as a “non-member state” in the United Nations on November 29, 2012, passed by the General Assembly 138 to 9, with 41 abstentions. Yet while there was undoubtedly coolness toward Netanyahu's government—in public—trade and arms sales continued apace.

The move toward a new nationalism in many quarters of the world brought with it a heightened awareness of national interests in many countries. While the Trump presidency was viewed as supportive of Israel, but dysfunctional and unpredictable, its approach to the Israel-Palestine conflict seemed in reality to be one of mixed signals. On

the one hand, agreeing to annexation of part of the West Bank, on the other, not implementing it immediately. Instructing US Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman to map out the contours of the territory to be annexed, then 'suspending' it in favor of ties with the UAE. All this in parallel with the public fanfare in recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Like the White house, the Kremlin refused to play by conventional rules, and Vladimir Putin attempted to clothe twenty-first-century Russia in the great power garments of the Soviet Union. While the growing illiberalism of the regime was frowned upon, Putin did not jump on the traditional bandwagon of anti-Semitism and tried to reduce any possible clash between Israeli and Russian forces in Syria.

In one sense, Israel's experience in dealing with the unexpected and the unknown in the past has left it better prepared than other states to deal with the unpredictable in the present.

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CHAPTER 30

ISRAEL AND THE JEWISH DIASPORA

MIRA SUCHAROV

ISRAEL maintains a symbiotic relationship with the Jewish Diaspora. Expectations, hopes, dreams, and demands run in multiple directions. While the relationship is characterized by mutual identity construction, it is not without various tensions, including concerns about whether and how to support Israeli government policies, whether Zionism is something that captures Jewish imaginations, and religious pluralism.

Diaspora derives from the Greek for “dispersal,” and in the Jewish context it connotes the idea of the Land of Israel as the core geographic locus of Jewish identity. The Jewish Diaspora emerged from the Jewish exile from Judea by the Romans in 70 CE. Since 1948, this relationship has reflected the State of Israel’s primary identity as a place of *kibbutz galuyot* (ingathering of the exiles) and the centrality of Zionism to most institutional expressions of Judaism worldwide. Nevertheless, an increasing number of Jews are challenging the role of Zionism in structuring their identity, and thus these Jews challenge the very relevance of the concept of the Jewish Diaspora. Some other anti-Zionists, on the other hand, actually embrace the term Diaspora. These “diasporists,” as they call themselves, are committed to strengthening Diaspora life as a counterweight to Zionism and Israel. The rise of the popularity of Yiddish among millennials is in some ways a sign of this (Ellenson, 2017). For the purposes of this essay, I use the term *Diaspora* as shorthand for Jews outside of Israel, even if it doesn’t connect with the identity of all Jews. This chapter traces these dynamics while providing an overview of various corners of the Jewish world outside of Israel, with a special focus on political dynamics within the United States and Canada.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE JEWISH DIASPORA

Because most Diaspora Jews today have not emigrated from Israel, situating the Jewish Diaspora within the comparative literature on diaspora and migrations can be tricky. In

the case of Diaspora Jewry, “homeland” and “diaspora” therefore take on a much more imagined quality. One distinct subset of Diaspora Jews since 1948 is therefore the “Israeli diaspora,” referring to Israeli Jews who have actually emigrated from the State of Israel, known colloquially (and somewhat pejoratively) as *yordim*—those who have descended. As of 2012, Israeli Jewish émigrés numbered roughly 230,000 (330,000 total émigrés from Israel), according to a Pew Research Center study (Herman, 2012).

As previously noted, Jews themselves vary in how much they feel connected to Israel and thus whether they think of themselves as part of a “diaspora” in the first place (Aviv & Shneer, 2005). Still, given the shift in Diaspora thinking toward more specific engagement with Israel in ways that suit individuals’ values, Theodore Sasson has remarked that, in the case of American Jews specifically, they are becoming a “*normal* diaspora” (Sasson, 2014, p. 3; emphasis in the original).

Regardless of—and in some ways owing to—the debate over Zionism and Jewish self-identification, Israel does appear to be a central part of Jewish identity for American Jews. According to a 2013 Pew survey of Jewish Americans, 43 percent reported that Israel is an “essential” part of what being Jewish means to them, and 44 percent indicated that it’s “important but not essential.” Only 12 percent said it is “not important” (Pew Research Center, 2013). Michael Barnett (2016, p. 6) describes a typical trip to Israel as “unleashing a feeling of warmth, comfort and belonging” among American Jews. These affective attachments can and often are used instrumentally by Diaspora Jewish communities seeking to sustain themselves. Similarly, these attachments are used and forged by the State of Israel as it seeks global support (Baron, 2015; Sheffer, 2012).

One recent example of how this sense of attachment has coalesced in uncomfortable ways is President Donald Trump’s announcement in December 2017 recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and his declaration that the United States would be moving its embassy there from Tel Aviv. In the controversy stemming from Trump’s being the first president since the 1995 Embassy Act to not sign the presidential waiver that passes through the Oval Office every six months, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke approvingly of the announcement in ways that sought to appeal to Diaspora Jews. “Jerusalem,” Netanyahu said, “has been the capital of the Jewish people for 3,000 years. . . . So it’s rare to be able to speak of new and genuine milestones in the glorious history of this city, yet today’s pronouncement by President Trump is such an occasion” (Landau, 2017). While expressing concerns about the president’s timing, Rick Jacobs, the head of the Reform movement, the largest Jewish denomination in America, called Trump’s declaration an “affirm[ation of] an age-old dream of the Jewish people and of all who care about Israel” (Jacobs, 2017).

Almost half of the world’s 14 million Jews live in Israel (6.3 million Jews in Israel), and the rest are concentrated among the following countries, although no country has nearly the number that the United States does. The United States has 5,700,000 Jews; France has 460,000; Canada has 390,000; the United Kingdom has 290,000; Argentina and Russia each have 180,000; Germany has 117,000; Australia has 113,000; Brazil has

94,000; Ukraine has 56,000; South Africa has 70,000; Hungary has 48,000; and there are 40,000 in Mexico and 30,000 in Belgium (Jewish Virtual Library, 2016).

Since 1948, and continuing a trend begun during successive waves of *aliyah* dating from the 1880s, Jewish immigration to Israel has taken the form of pull and push factors (see the chapter by Willen and Zawdu in this volume). On the one hand is ideological conviction (especially in the case of North American Jewish *olim*), and on the other are the forces of hardship and persecution (especially among Arab Jews, and later Ethiopian and Russian arrivals). Absorption success has depended on initial levels of social and human capital, along with levels of societal prejudice and racism in Israel (Lazin, 2002; Smootha, 2008).

Most of the Jews of the Arab world left in the late 1940s and early 1950s, heading for the nascent State of Israel and elsewhere. Thousands of Ethiopian Jews emigrated to Israel in the 1980s and 1990s, in two Israeli-government-assisted operations. As the USSR was collapsing around 1990, more than one million Soviet Jews emigrated to Israel with the help of loan guarantees from North American United Jewish Appeal organizations (and the precursors to the Jewish Federations of North America) (Sales, 2015; Sasson, 2014, p. 23).

The influx of Mizrahi Jews into an Ashkenazi-dominated establishment brought new challenges regarding ethnicity and class to the fore (see the chapter by Smootha in this volume). These trends were heightened and intensified by the arrival of Black Jews from Ethiopia, as racism became more apparent. (The influx of asylum seekers from Eritrea and Sudan starting in 2006—most of whose claims have not yet been heard and processed—has added yet another layer of exclusion, with a racial component, tacked onto Israel's attempts to restrict non-Jewish immigration generally.)

The wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union saw a shift to the right in Israeli politics, as many Israeli voters from the former Soviet Union brought with them an antipathy to the socialist policies that had undergirded the Israeli establishment in the first few decades of the state. Furthermore, debates over conversion policies took on a new urgency and intensity, as many of these immigrants had Jewish ancestry but weren't considered Jewish according to Jewish law. Israeli legislation on conversion has introduced tension into the Israeli-Diaspora relationship, as some of it undermines the credentials of Conservative and Reform rabbis in North America (Sales, 2017).

In Europe, the UK Jewish community and Israel have seen a three-to-two population flow in favor of Israeli emigration to Britain, according to a 2015 report (Sokol, 2015). A 2017 survey by the Anti-Defamation League conducted in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom found that anti-Semitic attitudes had declined from previous years (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 2017). However, Sweden has recently seen a spate of anti-Semitic attacks on synagogues and other sites, reigniting concerns about anti-Semitism that had come to a head several years earlier (Stavrou, 2017; Sucharov, 2013).

In recent years the relationship between Israel and Jews in France has taken on added urgency, as anti-Semitic attacks in France—likely fueled by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—arguably led to an uptick in *aliyah* (Jewish immigration to Israel) in 2014. That

year, 6,658 French Jews immigrated to Israel. In 2015, 7,469 immigrated (since then, emigration numbers have fallen) (Lipshiz, 2016). In January 2015, after a terrorist attack at a kosher supermarket in Paris in which four hostages were murdered, Netanyahu ignited controversy when he told France's Jews that "the State of Israel is not just the place to which you turn in prayer. The State of Israel is also your home." He added that he was convening "a special team of ministers . . . to advance steps to increase immigration from France and other countries in Europe that are suffering from terrible anti-Semitism" (Lazaroff, 2015).

Various European leaders reacted with a measure of defensiveness, arguing that Jews should not feel they have to leave their countries (Lazaroff, 2015). While attacks on Jews for being Jews are certainly bitter examples of anti-Semitism and must be condemned as such, the larger context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict makes this dynamic more complex to address. And the exporting of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has not been limited to Europe. Argentina's Jewish community was thrust onto the global stage in 1994 when it earned the tragic distinction of being the target of the largest terrorist attack in Argentinian history, with the bombing by Hezbollah of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, which killed eighty-seven and injured hundreds. During the 1990s and early 2000s, Argentina lost around 10,000 Jews to emigration, with 6,000 going to Israel and the rest mainly to the United States and Canada (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.).

Foreign policy toward Israel remains a key election issue for Jews worldwide. A 2015 poll showed that 73 percent of Jews in the United Kingdom "said the political parties' attitudes to Israel were 'very' or 'quite' 'important in influencing how they would vote'" (Dysch, 2015). Policy toward Israel receded as an election issue in France in 2017, because Marine Le Pen's right-wing platform of xenophobia (particularly against Jews and Muslims) led the Jews overwhelmingly to support Emmanuel Macron, who won handily (Lipshiz 2017a). Nevertheless, some commentators have pointed to possible tensions between Macron and the Jewish community on the subject of French policy toward Israel, owing to moves like France's previous vote for a UNESCO resolution that critics interpreted as denying a Jewish historical claim to Jerusalem. When Macron said he would continue the foreign policy track of his predecessors, Jewish community leaders bristled (Lipshiz, 2017b).

Canadian Jews shifted markedly from their traditional support of the Liberal Party to supporting the Conservative Party under Stephen Harper, who took office in 2006, owing to his perceived stance on Israel. Mainstream Zionist institutions like the Jewish National Fund (JNF) showed their appreciation of Harper, including honoring him at their 2013 Negev Dinner, at which he said, "Israel has no greater friend than Canada." Many saw Canada's failed attempt at securing a seat on the 2011–12 Security Council as being retribution for the government's stance toward Israel (Sucharov, 2017). While we don't yet have data on Jewish voting patterns in the 2015 election, many Canadians seem to have tired of the Harper style, and the Liberal Party, under Justin Trudeau, regained power in 2015 (Sucharov, 2015).

ISRAELI ENGAGEMENT WITH THE DIASPORA

One of the primary ways Israel and the Diaspora connect is through the quasi-governmental organization known as The Jewish Agency (formally The Jewish Agency for Israel), whose leadership is drawn from both Israel and the Diaspora. The Jewish Agency describes its mission as “inspir[ing] Jews throughout the world to connect with their People, heritage, and homeland, and empower[ing] them to build a thriving Jewish future and a strong Israel” (Jewish Agency, n.d.).

One way of engaging the Diaspora is to ensure that Diaspora Jews see themselves as such. In addition to its ordinary network of diplomats, Israel sends a network of emissaries (*shlichim*) to Jewish communities. These sometimes include recent high school graduates, a role known as a *shin-shin* (an abbreviation for *sh’nat sherut*, or a year of national service, typically preceding military service). Some work at Hebrew schools, others at Jewish summer camps. It is not uncommon for Jewish summer camps to include an “Israel Day” among their programming, and Hebrew is used to varying degrees. A study of Jewish camps found that over 90 percent reported “strengthening connection to the State of Israel” as either an “important” or “primary” goal (with 51 percent reporting it as a “primary” goal) (Benor, Krasner, & Avni, 2016, p. 7).

One much-touted program to strengthen the Diaspora-Israel connection is Birthright, a free, ten-day trip to Israel for young Jewish adults aged eighteen to twenty-six, which is funded jointly by the Israeli government, North American Jewish Federations, and an array of American Jewish donors. Yehonatan Abramson calls Birthright a way of “constructing a diaspora” (Abramson, 2017). A crucial part of the experience is Jewish youth engaging with Israel Defense Forces (IDF) peers—a part of the trip known as a *mifgash* (encounter) (Saxe & Chazan, 2008; Sasson, Mittelberg, Hecht, & Saxe, 2011). Birthright participants’ experiences as college students or postcollege young adults are typically very different than what their conscripted Israeli peers undergo. This may serve to underscore a sense of Israel as an embattled security state and enable Diaspora Jews to consider a road not taken—or yet to be taken. The IDF currently has two thousand foreign recruits (according to 2014 data), many of whom hail from the United States (Watson, 2014).

Shaul Kelner locates Israel’s support of Birthright within the broader concept of political socialization. Yet he also points out a tension: while program organizers speak of building connections to Israel, much of the purpose is actually Diaspora building. It’s a common tension in Israel-Diaspora relations. “There are a host of reasons why diaspora is an assumed category that tour sponsors never raise to the level of principle,” Kelner writes, “not the least of which . . . are the programs’ ideological roots in Zionism” (Kelner, 2010, p. xx).

Much of the analysis of Birthright has also focused on its impact on Jewish continuity. Organizers hope that the sense of community enabled among a busload of young Jews touring together may facilitate a commitment to, or interest in, in-marriage

(Saxe et al., 2011). This suggests that the Diaspora, in partnership with Israel, uses an engineered connection to Israel as a conduit for its own fears about Jewish continuity.

Whatever the political goals in terms of specific forms of Zionism, an overarching function of programs like Birthright is to create a sense of “attachment” to Israel. The word regularly appears on surveys, with the 2013 Pew survey of Jewish Americans revealing that 69 percent are “emotionally attached” to Israel (30 percent say “very” attached, and 39 percent say “somewhat attached”) (Pew Research Center, 2013). The program has been found to increase “favorable” attitudes to Israel among Birthright participants but has no effect on attitudes toward West Bank settlements (an indicator used, in the case of one study, to measure attitudes about ethnonationalism) (Sasson, Shain, Hecht, Wright, & Saxe, 2014).

Concern with “attachment” levels has led to communal handwringing over whether American Jews are experiencing a “distancing” from Israel. Sociologists of American Jewry have studied this at length (Cohen & Kelman, 2007; Kadushin, Saxe, & Sasson, 2008), yet it is unclear whether these surveys reveal authentic feelings of attachment in a psychological-experiential sense or are probing levels of support for Israel’s governing structures and policies. Cohen and Kelman acknowledge this issue:

Even asking if one is “pro-Israel” or a “supporter of Israel” depends heavily upon the circumstances of the day, and upon whether respondents think “Israel” refers to the government, the country, or some metaphoric idea. For many people, the question of being “pro-Israel” is as strange as asking if one is “pro-France” or “pro-Brazil.” Many would also see the question and term itself as loaded in the way favored by Israel advocacy organizations, such that the only way to “support” Israel is to take an “Israel: right-or-wrong” stance, suggesting that public criticism cannot work in concert with a broader notion of “support.” The linguistic and methodological complexities in this realm abound. (Cohen & Kelman, 2007, p. 4)

Anti-Zionist Jewish groups in America, like Jewish Voice for Peace, have used Birthright to try to sever the link between Jewish identity and Israel and raise awareness of the plight of Palestinian refugees. Their “Return the Birthright” campaign urges Birthright-eligible Jews to sign a manifesto pledging to forgo the trip. “Don’t take a trip sponsored by conservative donors and the Israeli government, where the ongoing oppression and occupation of Palestinians will be hidden from you, just because it’s free,” reads the statement. “There are other ways for us to strengthen our Jewish identities, in community with those who share our values. Israel is not our Birthright” (Jewish Voice for Peace, n.d.). This is a trend that continues what Peter Beinart noted in an influential article: “For several decades, the Jewish establishment has asked American Jews to check their liberalism at Zionism’s door, and now, to their horror, they are finding that many young Jews have checked their Zionism instead” (Beinart, 2010).

DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT WITH ISRAEL

At the formal level, Diaspora engagement with Israel is organized through systems of Jewish charities, with over \$1 billion a year going to Israel (Nathan-Kazis, 2014). In North America, this occurs both through the Jewish Federations' annual campaign and through other organizations that fundraise for Israeli universities, hospitals, Magen David Adom, the Jewish National Fund, and even the IDF. (Buying State of Israel bonds is not technically contributing to a charity.) There is also a network of Israeli nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that fundraise in the Diaspora to shore up and monitor human rights and civil rights in Israel and the West Bank. These include groups like the New Israel Fund and Americans for Peace Now (or Canadians Friends of Peace Now), all of which are based abroad as well as in Israel, and local Israeli NGOs like B'Tselem, Breaking the Silence, Adalah, Sikkuy, and Physicians for Human Rights.

A growing force is influential mega-donors like the American business magnate Sheldon Adelson. With his support for causes including Birthright, Yad Vashem, Ariel University in the West Bank, the Republican Jewish Coalition, and the Zionist Organization of America, Adelson's influence has changed the playing field of Diaspora-Jewish relations. He is widely understood to own *Israel Hayom* (the free daily newspaper in Israel, the one most widely read on weekdays and seen as a mouthpiece for Netanyahu), though his lawyer has claimed that Adelson's relative owns it (Jewish Telegraphic Agency & Wootliff, 2016). Having parted ways with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), with his massive wealth Adelson is able to exercise direct influence on Israeli politics in ways tailored to his particular prosettlement and generally right-wing preferences (Geier, 2015).

In recent years some commentators and activists have attempted to reveal the extent to which Jewish Federations either fund West Bank settlement activity or more generally prop up the occupation, while paying lip service to the two-state solution (Leaderman-Bray & DeGroot, 2016; Neiss, 2017). Some Diaspora groups, like IfNotNow, protest Jewish Federations' and other Jewish organizations' support for the occupation. IfNotNow engages in direct-action activities in the West Bank with Israeli and Palestinian partners and in protests against American Jewish institutions (Lieberman, 2017).

Funding is by its nature fungible, and Israel, like any government, decides how to allot its resources. This means that only a full boycott (and the unlikely cessation of annual US aid and/or sanctions) would have any sort of significant material impact. Then again, criticizing the role of Jewish Federations in supporting the occupation could reduce Jewish support for those umbrella bodies in favor of targeted funding to local agencies like Jewish day schools, senior residences, kosher food banks, Jewish Community Centers, Jewish child and family services, summer camps, and so on. (Synagogues are normally outside of the automatic Jewish Federation funding framework, though they can receive monies through grants and donor-advised funds.) Other Diaspora Jews who

want to support Israel but not the occupation might choose to support Israeli human and civil rights and socially based NGOs directly. Although groups like IfNotNow have succeeded in raising awareness about mainstream Jewish institutional support for the occupation, they are attractive to mainly the younger generation, and it's not yet clear whether they have succeeded in having an impact on donors.

The Israel Lobby

The more formal public-to-government lobbying activities known as the Israel lobby occur as an offshoot of Jewish community activities in Canada and separately from Jewish community activities in the United States. In Canada, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) sees itself as the arm of the Canadian Jewish community, a view that the mainstream grass roots either embraces or, owing to historical controversy over the Canadian Jewish Congress having been shuttered as CIJA emerged, rejects; activists in more left-wing and radical circles express outright disdain owing to CIJA's conservative views on Israel. The organization's claim to serve as the arm of the Jewish community is in some ways legitimate, since its funding derives from a portion of funds raised by the Jewish Federations' annual campaign. (CIJA says that its funding derives from over 100,000 donors to Jewish Federations's annual campaigns; CIJA, n.d.). Additional funds come from private donors.

In the United States, the main Israel lobby is AIPAC, a group that attempts to position itself as bipartisan, describing itself as seeking "to strengthen, protect and promote the U.S.-Israel relationship in ways that enhance the security of the United States and Israel" (AIPAC, n.d.). After the publication of international relations scholars John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt's book *The Israel Lobby* (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007), controversy swirled both in scholarly circles—about the relative role of interest groups in shaping foreign policy, particularly among realist scholars, who normally viewed the state as a unitary actor—and in popular circles, about whether tracing the influence of a particular network of pro-Israel interest groups implied unsavory connotations of Jewish control (NPR, 2007; see also the chapter by Stein in this volume). Unlike Canada's CIJA, as the main American Israel lobby, AIPAC doesn't tie itself officially to the organs of the Jewish community.

Since 2008, the Israel lobby has become more nuanced with the founding of J Street, which bills itself as "pro-Israel and pro-peace." In size and influence, though, AIPAC still dwarfs J Street; the 2016 AIPAC conference had fifteen thousand attendees (including two-thirds of the members of Congress), compared to thirty-five hundred at J Street's 2017 conference and a much more modest showing of members of Congress (Hager, 2016; Perugino, 2017). AIPAC's annual budget is \$66 million, compared to \$7.5 million for J Street (including J Street's educational fund) (Allison, 2015).

In addition to the joint Israel-Diaspora Birthright initiative, Diaspora Jewish communities engage with Israel through an array of informal mechanisms, including day schools, religious (supplementary) schools, synagogues, JCCs, Hillels (on campus), and

summer camps. Each of these institutions tends to have some form of formal and informal educational wings, in part devoted to contemporary Israeli politics and society. The JCCs may have day camp programs or Israeli independence day celebrations or adult education courses on the topic of Israel. Rabbis' sermons may contain messages about attachment to Israel or Israeli politics—though there is much debate over whether pulpit rabbis feel free enough to speak their mind on Israeli politics—as well as speakers' series covering contemporary Israel. At issue in these forums is often what kinds of speakers are deemed acceptable, whether and how the community determines “red lines,” and how to advance a sense of connection to Israel as well as a sense of justice. These issues are discussed further in the following section.

TENSIONS WITHIN THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY OVER ISRAEL

In spite of, or perhaps because of, the divided nature of American Jewish perceptions of Israeli policy, the community has increasingly come to experience the policing of boundaries of acceptable discourse. Cohen and Kelman's (2007) comments on the fraught nature of the “pro-Israel” label indirectly point to this dynamic.

Mainstream Diaspora institutions increasingly have come to see themselves as guardians of the discourse on Israel's image. This despite the fact that in a 2013 survey of American Jews, 48 percent of American Jews stated that they believe the Israeli government is not making a sincere effort to reach peace with the Palestinians (38 percent think the Israeli government is doing so) (Pew Research Center, 2013). A resulting effect has been an active policing of boundaries of discourse around Israel. There have been some striking examples in recent years, such as the American Jewish author David Harris-Gershon's booktalk being canceled at the DCJCC—the Jewish Community Center in Washington, DC—when he, in a blogpost, expressed support for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel (BDS) from a liberal Zionist perspective (Harris-Gershon, 2014; Sucharov, 2014). Another example has been the debate swirling around what are widely known as Hillel International's “standards of partnership.” These rules, which Hillel calls its “Guidelines for Campus Israel Activities,” state:

Hillel will not partner with, house, or host organizations, groups, or speakers that as a matter of policy or practice:

- Deny the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish and democratic state with secure and recognized borders;
- Delegitimize, demonize, or apply a double standard to Israel;
- Support boycott of, divestment from, or sanctions against the State of Israel;
- Exhibit a pattern of disruptive behavior towards campus events or guest speakers or foster an atmosphere of incivility. (Hillel International, n.d.)

In 2012, a group called Open Hillel was formed by students trying to challenge these guidelines (Sucharov, 2016).¹

Increasingly, the tone and tenor of debate on Israel has come to be what Dov Waxman (2016) has described as “trouble in the tribe.” Backgrounding these specific debates are the overall push-pull dynamics of particularism and universalism, ideals that Michael Barnett (2016, p. 6) describes as animating the debate about Israel among American Jews. “American Jews’ identification with the Jewish people and Israel,” he writes, “pulls toward particularism and an inward-looking nationalism, while the values they associate with American identity pull toward universalism and an outward-looking cosmopolitanism.”

Three main camps have coalesced in the Diaspora on these issues: the right-wing Zionist community as exhibited by AIPAC and to its right, the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA); the progressive Zionist community, exemplified by groups like J Street, Americans for Peace Now, the New Israel Fund, and Ameinu; and the non-Zionist (or anti-Zionist) Left, exemplified by Jewish Voice for Peace. (In Canada, these groups are CIJA to the right, J Space and Canadian Friends of Peace Now occupying the centre-left—or the progressive Zionist spot, and Independent Jewish Voices on the far left, meaning the non-Zionist position. IfNotNow, which now has a presence in Canada too, straddles the left-Zionist and non-Zionist position, focusing on ending Jewish communal support for the occupation.)

Over the last several years, the largest apparent fault lines between the non-Zionist Left and the progressive Zionist Left have been the latter’s commitment to a two-state solution and its rejection of wholesale Palestinian return and the anti-Zionist Left’s embrace of BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel). More recently, organizations run by millennials (such as IfNotNow and the Center for Jewish Nonviolence) have brought non-Zionists and progressive Zionists together under a general “anti-occupation rubric,” bracketing questions about whether there should be a “one-state solution” or a “two-state solution,” which links supporters with opponents of BDS.

Those who support BDS believe that it is the best nonviolent tool available to bring about an end to the occupation; that the occupation is in the hands of Israel, with the state holding the lion’s share of power; and that refugee return is enshrined in international law, through UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (though General Assembly resolutions, unlike those issued by the Security Council, are nonbinding). They argue that whether or not BDS is actually effective in shifting Israeli policy right now, it provides hope and solidarity to Palestinians under occupation who have no other nonviolent options.

Some opponents of BDS object to what they see as the BDS movement’s suggestion that the responsibility to end the occupation lies solely with Israel. Others oppose the BDS demand for Palestinian refugee return; these critics argue that Israel is entitled and even morally required to maintain its Jewish majority. Some oppose academic and cultural boycotts on principle, claiming that they fly in the face of the ideal of academic freedom and the ethic of the open exchange of ideas underlying artistic and cultural production. Others cite the history of Nazi boycotts against Jewish-owned businesses to

suggest that BDS smacks of anti-Semitism; some of these critics say that since roughly half the world's Jews live in Israel, BDS is effectively a boycott of Jews. Still others argue that while the BDS movement may not inherently be anti-Semitic, it provides shelter for anti-Semites.

ISSUES OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

One ongoing point of tension between Israel and the Diaspora, particularly for the roughly half of American Jews who belong to the Conservative (18 percent) and Reform (35 percent) movements (plus the smaller Reconstructionist and Jewish Renewal movements), is the issue of religious pluralism (Pew Research Center, 2013; see also the chapter by Ben-Porat in this volume). The Kotel (Western Wall) has become a particular flashpoint, with the non-Orthodox, egalitarian movements pushing for an egalitarian prayer space. Though it advocates women-only Torah chanting in the women's section, the Women of the Wall movement in Israel has become a focal point. A plan developed by Jewish Agency head Natan Sharansky in 2016 would have created a separate egalitarian space in the main worship area, but that plan has been scrapped (Maltz, 2017). Diaspora Jewish reaction was swift and angry, with the Jewish Agency's board of governors even canceling a planned gala dinner with Prime Minister Netanyahu in Jerusalem in June 2017 (Times of Israel Staff, 2017). Also in 2016, in another challenge to the Conservative and Reform movements in Israel, the Knesset passed a law banning non-Orthodox converts from using state-run mikvahs (Maltz, 2016).

Most of the tension is a function of the state-centered Orthodox control over public religious life. But part of the story lies in a Jewish Israeli electorate that is 80 percent secular, yet imbued with many facets of traditional religious practice, as Ilan Troen (2016) has shown. Against that backdrop, the more egalitarian-committed Reform and Conservative movements have struggled to gain prominence. (Only 5 percent of Israelis, according to the Pew Research Center, identify with either of those two movements.) A third aspect of the dynamic is a Diaspora Jewry in which the fastest growing denomination is Orthodoxy (the Orthodox community has increased fourfold over the last two generations; Cohen, 2016) and in which many nonreligious Jews are content to let the Orthodox define proper religious practice, considering them—even if unconsciously—keepers of the faith.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between Israel and the Diaspora is characterized by a mutual dependency: first, owing to the desire for Israel to maintain levels of financial and policy support; and second, it is a function of the desire of Diaspora Jewish community leaders

to resist the natural forces of assimilation. Forging identity ties to Israel is one way that communities have sought to fill this need. At the same time, there are increased divisions within the Diaspora over whether or how best to support Israel, whether to follow principles of justice, humanitarianism, and universalism or to adhere to values of tribalism and particularism. Combined with these philosophical debates are fast-moving changes in the Diaspora related to religious observance, with Orthodoxy poised to dwarf other denominations in the coming years. This means that some of the current Diaspora tensions with Israel—particularly around religious pluralism—may recede, just as the Jewish community may relax into an embrace of more conservative—in today's landscape, meaning status quo—foreign policies toward Israel over time. The trend of mega-donors pushing Israel in even more hawkish and prosettlement directions will likely intensify.

NOTE

1. Disclosure: I sit on the Academic Council of Open Hillel.

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PART V

ISSUES IN
ISRAELI
POLITICS

CHAPTER 31

THE TERRITORIES IN ISRAELI POLITICS

ARIE PERLIGER AND AMI PEDAHZUR

BEGINNING in the late 1970s, the debate regarding the future of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank was one of the most divisive in the Israeli political system. The Israeli Right supported expanding and legalizing permanent Jewish presence in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, using mainly religious and security-related justifications. The Israeli Left, in general, believed that such a presence was an obstacle to conciliation with the Arab world and the Palestinian national movement, as well as morally problematic in terms of its impact on the Palestinian population (Newman, 1985; Naor, 2001). Indeed, most electoral studies in Israel illustrated the strong correlation in the Israeli electorate between party identification and the individual's stance on the future and legitimacy of the settlements (Andersen & Yaish, 2003; Arian, 1995, 1997).

A reasonable expectation is that the growth or decline of the settlements' project will be associated with the balance of power between the two political camps in Israel. In addition, the improvements in Israel's geostrategic situation (such as the signing of peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan and the collapse of both Syria and Iraq) were supposed to lead to some decline in public support for Israel's control of the West Bank, since the security justifications for such control seem to have become less viable. However, neither effect seems to be in play. In fact, the growth in the size of the Israeli population in the West Bank and the increase in public support for the settlements' project seem to be following a surprisingly linear trajectory, rejecting potential association with changes in the political and/or strategic landscape (see figures 31.1 and 31.2).

In this chapter we strive to explain this paradox by providing three complementary explanations for the success of the settlers' movement in overcoming their limited representation within the political system, as well as changes in Israel's political and strategic environment. We set the stage for our analysis with a brief overview of the origins and evolution of the settlements' project, as well as by presenting various parameters that illustrate its success. Subsequently, we present our explanations and elucidate how they complement each other effectively to allow the settlers to bypass,

or overcome, various political and security-related challenges. We conclude by assessing the ability of the settlers' community to continue to utilize similar methods of political activism and policymaking in the future.

THE EVOLUTION AND LONG-LASTING SUCCESS OF THE SETTLEMENTS' PROJECT

Until the late 1960s, the notion of the Jewish nation settling all of Eretz Israel was little more than hypothetical. The reason was simple: the majority of the lands included in the biblical Eretz Israel, especially those in the east and north, had become integral parts of Jordan and Syria. As a result, territorial maximalists from the various Zionist movements could only dream about incorporating them into the Israeli nation. However, the Six-Day War (1967) turned the tide. In the weeks prior to the war the Israeli political and defense establishment faced growing pressure, as the geostrategic situation between Israel and its neighboring countries escalated quickly (Egypt blocked the straits of Tiran, thus isolating maritime shipping to and from the Israeli city of Eilat, and forced the evacuation of UN peacekeeping forces from the Sinai Peninsula). Eventually, Israel initiated aerial and ground preemptive attacks on both the Syrian and Egyptian fronts, which resulted in the elimination of both countries' air forces and the rapid collapse of their ground forces. The quick and impressive Israeli victory facilitated euphoric sentiments and a sense of invincibility. Hence, it is not completely surprising that many within the Israeli political leadership were confronted with the temptation to redefine the country's borders in accordance with the vision of Greater Israel. Indeed, East and West Jerusalem were merged almost immediately after the war into a unified municipality, and a few years later soldiers (and later civilians) were settled in the Jordan Valley, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula (Pedahzur, 1996; Segal, 1999).

The issue of settling Jews in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip presented unique normative and policy challenges (see the chapter by Barak in this volume), mainly since these regions were densely populated by Palestinians (unlike the other regions, which absorbed new Jewish settlements). Two major ideological movements within the Israeli political system advocated the continuation of Israel's control of, and the formation of Jewish settlements in, the West Bank. The first was based on religious Zionists, who eventually coalesced under the banner of the Gush Emunim movement (Aran, 1987). They shared a theological perception that considered the emergence of the Zionist movement, and later on the Israeli victories in the 1948–1949 war and the Six-Day War, as phases in a holy redemption process that will end with the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of a Jewish Kingdom (Cohen-Almagor, 1992). They also aspired to expedite this process by following Rabbi Cook's guidelines for settling in any accessible area of the biblical land of Israel and restoring the Jewish religious presence on the Temple Mount (Eldar & Zertal, 2004; Segal, 1988).

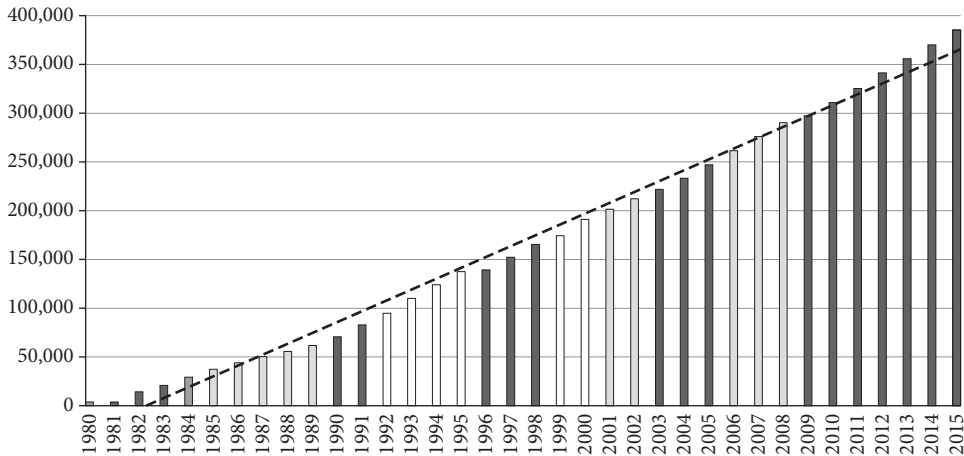


FIGURE 31.1 Number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank per year (1980–2015). White = left-wing governing coalition; gray = unity governing coalition; black = right-wing governing coalition.

Note: The unity government in 2006–2008 included Kadima and Labor Parties. All other unity governments included the Labor and Likud Parties.

Source: Data extracted from the periodical publications of the Israeli Bureau of Statistics, which are currently available online at <http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader>.

The second ideological movement, while inspired by the biblical and historical connections of the Jewish people with the West Bank, focused on nationalistic and security-related rationalizations. Therefore, its followers emphasized the historical right of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, as well as the importance of the strategic depth that controlling the West Bank provides. In many ways, they saw the Jewish settlements as another manifestation of the classical Zionist tactic of pre-Israel, which utilized the quick formation of Jewish settlements in strategic locations as a security device and a mechanism to legitimize Israel's control (Feige, 2009; Filc, 2010).

It is not surprising that the first initiatives to settle Jews in the West Bank utilized elements of the ideological frameworks of both movements. More specifically, if we exclude the Jordan Valley settlements, which are located mostly in scarcely populated areas, the first settlements were formed in areas that had some theological or historical importance to the Jewish people, as well as during important religious holidays. For example, the first attempt of Jews to settle in the West Bank occurred during Passover of 1968, in the city (Hebron) where the founding fathers of Judaism are buried (according to the Jewish tradition) (Arnon, 2006). Moreover, the legal status of the settlements was initially justified by the Israeli state (and later confirmed by the Israeli Supreme Court) by security reasons. Thus, for example, one of the first Jewish settlements, Beit-El, received its legal legitimacy and approval from the Israeli Supreme Court on the ground that it served security needs (Supreme Court Ruling 390/79, 1979). In summary, the theological fervor of the religious Zionists provided the human power and social legitimacy that ignited the settlements' project, while the secular elements that focused on nationalistic

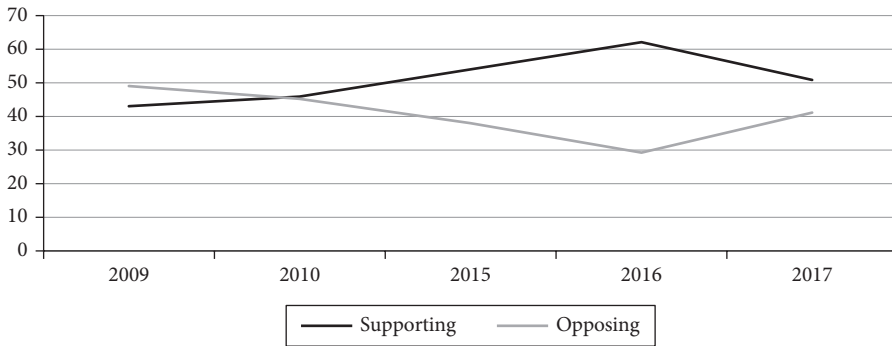


FIGURE 31.2 Public support and opposition for maintaining the settlements (% of population).

Source: Data from “Israel Public Opinion Polls: Opinion on Settlements and Outposts,” The Jewish Virtual Library, retrieved from <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/israeli-opinion-on-settlements-and-outposts-2009-present>

and security-related justifications mobilized support from within the Israeli public administration and judicial branch and thus streamlined formal support for the settlers’ initiatives.

The great majority of settlements in the West Bank were founded between the late 1970s and mid-1980s. The victory of the Israeli right-wing camp in the 1977 and 1981 elections facilitated the formation of new settlements, especially after the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt and the joining of the far-right Tehia party to the governing coalition. After the mid-1980s very few new settlements were established, and the main focus of the settlements’ movement shifted to ensuring further expansion of existing settlements.

These expansions had formal and informal dimensions. The formal expansions were approved by the Israeli authorities. The informal expansions were reflected in initiatives of the more extreme elements of the movement, which were engaged in the formation of small outposts on the outskirts of existing settlements, without governmental approval—at least not on the formal or declarative level, although many enjoyed the support and resources of the local public bureaucracy and various elements of the civilian administration of the Israeli military (Hivri, 2012; Kaniel, 2003; Levinson & Azulay, 2009).

While some challenge the perception that the settlements’ project is overall a highly successful enterprise (by focusing on specific interpretations of the demographic growth of the settlers’ community; see, e.g., Arieli, 2016, 2017), an examination of at least two important criteria provides substantial support for this assertion.

Demographic Success

From a demographic perspective, the portion of the entire Israeli citizen population residing in the West Bank has increased significantly since the 1980s. In 1989 West Bank settlers made up 1.34 percent of the total population, in 1995 2.45 percent, and in 2006

3.68 percent. Today West Bank settlers constitute 4.39 percent of the Israeli population. Thus, not only has the absolute number of Israeli settlers increased systematically, but in relative terms, the settlers have been able to increase their percentage of the Israeli population. This is an extraordinary accomplishment considering the rapid growth of the Israeli population in the last three decades, especially with the 1.5 million immigrants Israel absorbed from the former republics of the Soviet Union (Hacohen, 2003).

The settlements did not just become more populated; they also became more religiously and ideologically diverse. Until the late 1980s most settlements were comprised of religious Zionists, who were looking to exercise their commitment to the idea of Greater Israel and the theology of Rabbi Cook. Today, however, the picture is substantially different. A significant portion of the settlers are ultra-Orthodox, as well as secular, Israelis (who usually reside in the periphery of Jerusalem) (Rebhun, Malach, & Gavison, 2008).

Israel's demographic success is especially impressive when considering that this growth was achieved without the formal formation of new settlements in the last twenty years and despite significant periods during which the Israeli government "froze" construction of housing units in existing settlements. Finally, while most of Israel's peripheral towns faced enormous challenges in convincing the second and third generations of residents to stay and build their lives there, the settlers were highly successful in instilling in their new generations strong convictions based on the ideological pillars of the settlements' project, and thus most second-generation settlers indeed preferred to continue to reside in the West Bank (although not always in their parents' settlements) (Hivri, 2012).

Territorial Success

While the overarching objective of the settlers' leadership was to increase the Jewish population in the West Bank, a related goal was to ensure a geographic dispersion that would solidify Jewish presence and control in areas with historical importance for Jews and also in strategic locations that would challenge any attempt to create a Palestinian state with territorial continuity. The formation of a Palestinian state was conceived by the settlers, since the Camp David agreements in 1978, as the most profound threat to Israel's continued control of the West Bank (Eldar & Zertal, 2004).

Examination of the geographical dispersion of the settlements illustrates the settlers' success in achieving both objectives. It is difficult to find a biblical site (i.e., a location mentioned in the biblical text) that is not populated by settlers. Settlements such as Shilo, Beit-El, Beit Horon, Dolev, Elkana, Elon Moreh, and Gilo are just some examples of this systematic effort. The importance of this practice should not be understated. The re-establishment of a Jewish presence in places that Israelis associate with the biblical text and Jewish heritage is a significant part of the settlers' efforts to enhance the legitimacy and positive branding of the settlements' project.

For many, however, the most acute success of the settlers is reflected in their ability to spread settlements in geostrategic locations that ensure a Jewish presence in most areas of the West Bank while also undermining the possibility of the formation of a

territorially viable Palestinian state. Already in 1981 the settlements spread out in two long “arms” across Samaria (the northern part of the West Bank). In 1992 a similar stretch of two “arms” of settlements was visible in Judea (the southern part of the West Bank). By 1996, with the exception of a small part at the northern point of the West Bank, the Jewish settlements effectively crisscrossed the entire region, making it virtually impossible to identify areas exclusively populated by Palestinians.

One of the interesting developments of the last two decades has been the spillover of the tactic of strategic geographical dispersion to the local level, especially in Jerusalem. In the late 1980s several nonprofit, third sector organizations started to purchase real estate in Eastern Jerusalem and the Old City. While an association by the name of Elad bought land in an area of East Jerusalem known as “City of David” (which embraces the Temple Mount from the south), another association by the name of Ateret Cohanim bought real estate in the Muslim quarter of the Old City, bordering the western and southern walls of the Temple Mount. These two clusters of Jewish presence, taken together with the Jewish Quarter (located southwest of the Temple Mount) and the town of Maale-Edumim (a suburb east of Jerusalem that is populated mostly by secular Israelis and religious Zionists), ensure that the Temple Mount, the holiest place for both Muslims and Jews and the major source of contention regarding future control of Jerusalem, will be increasingly isolated from Palestinians’ population centers.

The city of Hebron reflects similar dynamics. Here the local settlers’ community was able to isolate the local Palestinian population from the Tomb of the Patriarchs, a holy site for both Muslims and Jews. This was done by settling in nearby neighborhoods and gradually putting pressure on local Palestinian residents to transition from the area to other parts of Hebron (Arnon, 2006).

In conclusion, the settlers’ enterprise was able to make the possibility of the establishment of a viable Palestinian state or the evacuation of Jewish settlers from the West Bank a highly impractical endeavor, especially considering the size of the settlers’ community and their unique geographical dispersion. The next section presents three mechanisms that combined to facilitate this success but have received limited attention in the literature on Israeli politics. These mechanisms are positive branding, formation of policy networks and transition of the settlers movement to the political mainstream.

DECIPHERING THE SUCCESS OF THE SETTLEMENTS’ PROJECT

One of the most important works that tried to explain the effectiveness of the settlements’ project was Ian Lustick’s influential book *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands* (Lustick, 1993), which explored Israel’s post-1967 territorial expansionism in a comparative perspective. Setting out to explain the mechanisms of state expansion and contraction, Lustick compared the Israeli settling activities in the West Bank and Gaza to the

British and French experiences in Ireland and Algeria, respectively. He posited two main stages of territorial expansion: (1) the *incumbency stage*, during which a state colonizes a territory, and (2) contingent upon the success of the first stage, *ideological hegemony*, namely consensus among the members of the colonizing nation that the annexed territories are inseparable from the nation.

One of the central myths that Lustick tried to disprove is that there is a point after which state expansion is irreversible. The cases of Britain and France, which disengaged from territories that both nations previously considered an integral part of the homeland, illuminate the fragility of Israel's settlements.

Since the publication of the book, the settlements in the West Bank have continued to expand. This trend seems counterintuitive even through the prism that Lustick offers. Unlike in the British and French cases, the Greater Israel ideology never gained a hegemonic status among Jews in Israel. The signing of the Oslo Accords and the formation of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994 demonstrated the absence of ideological consensus. Those events should have served as critical junctures at which Israel would be set on a path of contraction. Moreover, the failure of the peace process with the Palestinians generated a sense of reclusive ethnonationalism that should have expedited the contraction. Indeed, in 2005 Israel unilaterally dismantled its settlements in Gaza and withdrew from the territory (see the chapter by Sela in this volume). To these developments, we can add that the settlers' community was never more than marginal in terms of its size and never gained significant electoral representation. Hence, the question of the causes of the continuous success of the West Bank remains open.

In our view, the initial success was rooted more in factors related to the informal and symbolic dimensions of the Israeli political arena, which later on were also manifested in the more formal aspects of the Israeli political process.

Shaping the Brand: Symbolism and Political Emotional Attachment

As previously mentioned, the religious Zionists who were leading the initial settlement efforts enjoyed the support of secular maximalists and nationalist elements within the political system. With the help of these political groups, the religious Zionists were able to overcome a principal challenge: the fact that the majority of the secular Israeli public was not willing to support Israel's control over the West Bank based just on the religious Zionist narrative of a holy redemption process.

More specifically, the settlers' movement adopted in its early years a complementary narrative asserting that Israeli control over the West Bank was also driven by national security reasons; that is, that the settlements were an important tool for enhancing Israel's security because they ensured effective control over areas that provided Israel with crucial strategic depth. Common settlers' rhetoric, for example, magnified the role of the settlements as a buffer zone between a hostile Palestinian population and the main

Israeli population centers, as well as the risks the settlers had been taking to serve this national security goal (Pedahzur, 2011; Perliger, 2015).

The perception of the construction of new Jewish settlements as an important component of Israel's national security doctrine and of the Zionist struggle at large was of course not innovative or new. The early leaders of the settlements engaged in a symbolic rhetoric that utilized a traditional and popular Zionist legacy. They portrayed the settlers as pioneers, evoking a clear analogy to the Zionist pioneers who had arrived in Palestine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and founded most of the modern Zionist (Israeli) political movements/parties (Huberman, 2008; Newman, 1985; Sprinzak, 1989). Thus, the religious Zionist leaders legitimized the settlements by suggesting that they represented a continuation of the Zionist project at large and in line with the traditional methods used by the founding fathers of the state to promote Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel (Taub, 2007). It is important to note that this narrative was also adopted and acted upon by Zionist state agencies formed in the pre-state era, and which now found a new way to justify their existence and their access to state resources. As an example, the Division for Settlements of the Jewish Agency became one of the major tools used by the settlers to build and logistically support the infrastructure of new and existing settlements. Moreover, various bodies affiliated with the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), acting in many ways similar to the Jewish pre-state military militias, also provided ample logistical and security-related support to the settlements (Pedahzur, 2011).

To conclude, by embedding the settlers' project into the historical narrative of the Zionist movement, the settlers were able to minimize the exposure of their movement's ideological components, which were far from consensual and may have deterred supporters, as well as to mobilize support from those segments of the Israeli population who were willing to embrace this new "Zionist" project. While these parts of the secular Israeli population were not large enough to give the settlers' parties substantial electoral influence, they did help the settlers avoid the perception that they were strictly a fundamentalist movement that followed theological practices. In addition, the security-related rhetoric was convincing enough to elicit cooperation from the Israeli judicial system. In 1978 the Israeli Supreme Court provided formal approval and legal legitimacy to the building of Jewish settlements by accepting the argument that Israel's control of the West Bank was "combative/military control," and thus the military commanders of the territory had the right to approve Jewish settlements when they perceived them to be an important tool for enhancing security and enablement of military operations (Supreme Court Ruling 390/79, 1979; Eldar & Zertal, 2004).

The Formation of Policy Networks

The gradual success in placing the narrative of the settlers' movement within the broader Zionist ethos, combined with the ability of the Israeli Right in the late 1970s and early 1980s to gain (for the first time) enough electoral support to establish

governing coalitions, provided the settlers with resources and opportunities to breach the executive and public bureaucracy and form what can be described as effective policy networks. These policy networks allowed the settlers not just to ensure the funneling of the state's goods and resources to the settlements even when the executive branch was controlled by Left or unity coalitions (in 1984–1990 the executive was controlled by a coalition of both left- and right-wing parties), but also to further their legitimacy within the public administration.

This tactic was especially useful because the leaders of the settlers' movement were able to identify specific organizations and agencies that were essential for the survival and expansion of the settlements' project. Pedahzur (2011) has effectively illustrated how the "political networks" of the settlers within the Israeli military (e.g., NAHAL, Fighting Pioneer Youth), in relevant ministries (defense, housing, tourism, industry), and in semigovernmental organizations (i.e., Jewish Agency), among others, allowed them to manipulate policy decisions and to create comfortable conditions for continuing expansion of the settlements.

Several major mechanisms were employed by the settlers to create and maintain their policy networks. To begin with, considering the important role of the IDF in managing civilian services and providing security in the West Bank, the settlers and the religious Zionist community at large invested educational resources in streamlining their youth into prominent commanding roles within the Israeli combative infantry divisions and other prestige units (Levy, 2011; Perliger, 2011). In the long run, this facilitated the population of major military positions by members of the settlers' community. Today, the presence of settlers is prominent both at mid- and high levels of the IDF's leadership, a fact that may partially explain the IDF's systematic facilitation of the expanding infrastructure and accommodation of the security needs of the settlements (Levy, 2014).

While the growing prominence of religious Zionist youth in the fighting ranks of the IDF helped to further legitimize the settlers' movement and to enhance the social status and political capital of its leaders (Levy, 2011), more significant was the ability of the settlers to place important members of their leadership in prominent positions within the Israeli public administration. This was done with the help of sympathetic ministers, through conventional lobbying (in which the settlers were able to use their power in parties' primaries to extract appointments), and via concentrated efforts to turn existing officeholders into supporters of the settlers' movement (Pedahzur, 2011). In a related process, the settlers also were able to increase their visibility on many mainstream media platforms, which created more sympathetic coverage of their community. Finally, in the last few years, as right-wing governments have become more the norm, some settlers' leaders have transitioned to the formal political arena and become ministers and cabinet members. Each of them has systematically ensured the appointment of like-minded individuals in various positions in their ministries.

Probably the most recent example is that of Uri Ariel, the current minister of agriculture, who in the previous government served as the minister of housing and development. Ariel is mostly known as one of the most vocal and charismatic leaders of the settlers' movement. According to a report by Israel's government comptroller, agencies under

his control as minister of housing consistently showed preference in terms of budgetary support to organizations led by his supporters or promoted initiatives that support mainly religious Zionists'/settlers' communities (Bnia, 2017).

To conclude, the ability of the settlers' community to form effective networks within the various realms of the Israeli policymaking apparatus allowed them to ensure access to important resources, accumulate more public legitimacy, and undermine policies that threatened their interests.

Transition to the Political Mainstream

Starting in the late 1970s, the Israeli party system included parties whose main focus was the promotion of the vision of Greater Israel. However, most of these single-issue parties didn't survive for long or were never able to gain meaningful support from electoral groups outside the settlers' community. One of the implications was that more and more leaders of the religious Zionist and settlers' sectors preferred to join other, more stable, and more successful political parties, mainly the Likud. Cases in point are the attempt by Moshe Feiglin, one of the more prominent leaders of the mass protest against the Oslo Accords, to form a division within the Likud (named "Jewish Leadership") supported mainly by the more extreme parts of the settlers' movement, and the election to the Knesset via the Likud Party of settlers' leaders such as Yehuda Glick and Tzipi Hotovely.

This dynamic proved to be a highly effective political instrument, providing the settlers with a more effective path for influencing policymaking. It also had some additional consequences in terms of the Israeli political system's ideological orientation and policy agenda. To begin with, this process led to the support of a growing number of parties with extreme ideological notions that in the past had been mostly promoted by the settlers' parties. Thus, policies that promote internal homogeneity of the Israeli population and nativist practices and evoke nationalist-Jewish norms and views are now promoted by most parties on the center-right spectrum of the Israeli political system. In addition, today it is common to see the members of the Likud Party presenting the fiercest opposition to policies that may contradict the interests of the settlers' community. This is so even though traditionally the Likud has been considered the moderate component of the Israeli Right. As a result of this dynamic, other right-wing parties have been forced to adopt a more extreme agenda to maintain their ideological distinction and appeal.

The overall impact of these processes has been the transition of the entire party system to the right. For example, Yesh Atid, a relatively new party established in 2012 by media personality Yair Lapid, which was aiming to mobilize support from the center of the electoral map, preferred to focus on civilian issues such as the economic struggles of the middle class, refraining from any demands for territorial concessions in the West Bank. Further to the left, the Labor Party adopted the same rhetorical strategy by avoiding emphasis on its long-term opposition to the settlements' project and its ongoing support for the "two-state solution." Since the beginning of the current decade, all the leaders of the party—Shely Yachimovich, Itzhak Herzog, and Avi Gabai—have focused

in their campaigns on issues related to welfare policies, economic reforms, and the working class. Yachimovich, and recently Gabai, even emphasized Labor's opposition to attempts to de-legitimize the settler community and to consider large-scale evacuation of settlements (Levinson, 2017; Wiesz, 2014).

The Failure to Protect the Gaza Strip Settlements

Before discussing the new challenges that the settlers' community is facing, it is important to review the only significant setback experienced by the settlers' movement in the last three decades. The implementation of the Israeli "disengagement plan" in 2005 led to the evacuation of all Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip and from four small settlements in the northern part of the West Bank. The success of the Israeli government in completing the disengagement plan further reflects the importance of the three mechanisms that led to the success of the settlements' project, which were absent or limited in the case of the Jewish settlers in the Gaza Strip.

From a historical perspective, the Gaza Strip was never considered part of the biblical land of Israel and thus lacks any locations that can evoke symbolic emotions or sentiments among the Jewish Israeli public. In addition, the Gaza Strip's geographic and demographic characteristics made it clear from the early stages that controlling it did not provide Israel with any strategic advantages, and in fact the opposite may be the case. Finally, the peripheral nature of the Gaza Strip (in contrast to many settlements in the West Bank that were located in close proximity to population hubs such as Jerusalem and the Tel-Aviv metropolitan area), the relatively small size of the population in the Gaza settlements, and the less ideologically cohesive nature of the Gaza settlers undermined their ability to form effective policy networks or effectively utilize those created by the settlers' leadership (who were mostly from the West Bank).

It is also important to mention several objective differences between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that also probably led to the willingness of the majority of the Israeli public and political leaders to support the disengagement plan. These include the more extreme demographic gap between Jews and Palestinians in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank, the lack of industrial or economic infrastructure in comparison to the West Bank, and the fact that most of the Strip was already under Palestinian control as a result of the implementation of the Oslo Accords.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE SETTLEMENTS' PROJECT

In recent years there seems to have been a decline in the willingness of Israeli political elites to engage with the issue of the future of the settlements' project. This can be explained by an assortment of factors. One is that the continued failure of the Israeli Left

over the last fifteen years to increase its electoral power has encouraged Center and left-wing parties to engage with new/other policy issues that they hope will enable them to gain more popular support. Another possibility is that a growing number of political leaders are convinced that the Palestinian leadership is not willing, or ready, to make the necessary concessions to reach a peace agreement (the outbreak of the second intifada was an import factor in popularizing this perception). Finally, the growing instability in the Middle East and the emergence of new potential adversaries has perhaps facilitated a perception among Israeli leaders that it will be difficult in the current environment to gain legitimacy for any territorial concessions.

Regardless of the specific reasons, the dynamic in which more and more political leaders see the evacuation of settlements as a risky or unrealistic policy, and thus distance themselves from the issue, further reflects that beyond their demographic and territorial success, the settlers also have been able to promote a political discourse that *de facto* delegitimize policies that may undermine the continued expansion of the settlements. This specific delegitimization corresponds with similar efforts to delegitimize human rights organizations, as well as with the promotion of political initiatives that aim to counter attempts to end Israeli control of the West Bank, such as legislation passed in the Israeli Knesset in 2014 that conditions any Israeli territorial concessions in East Jerusalem on approval by a national referendum.

The growing consensus surrounding the settlements' project demands that the settlers' community deal with new challenges and dilemmas. They are not the scrappy political underdog anymore, fighting for its survival, nor do they need to invest in further convincing the public about what they perceive as their legitimate needs and security concerns. Moreover, they are now in many ways a lovable and admired sector of large parts of the political system, definitely in the right-center of the political spectrum. Considering this new reality, the settlers today face fundamentally different challenges than they faced twenty to thirty years ago, which will demand the formation of new tools of political activism.

To begin with, while the settlements have become more and more a legitimate and natural aspect of the Israeli polity, the international community has become less and less tolerant of the expansion of the Israeli presence in the West Bank. This has been reflected in growing criticism of Israel for its treatment of the Palestinians in the West Bank, growing willingness to boycott Israeli products and professionals, and the increasing isolation of Israel in international forums. In addition, there are growing concerns about Israel's ability to defend its policies in the West Bank to international judicial institutions. Considering these growing pressures on Israel, the settlers need to find effective mechanisms to gain some legitimacy among audiences outside of Israel. The appointment in 2015 of Dani Dayan—the former head of the Yesha Council (the governing body of the Israeli Municipalities in the West Bank)—as the Israeli consul in New York, as well as frequent trips to the United States in recent years by delegations of the settlers' leadership to meet with American legislators, represent the growing understanding within the settlers' community that they need to find ways to mobilize support from foreign audiences.

Another challenge is related to the growing divisions within the settlers' community. While in its initial stages the settlements' project enjoyed high levels of demographic and ideological homogeneity, today the settlements are clearly divided into three major types. Alongside the traditional religious Zionists settlements, a significant number of settlers resides in ultra-Orthodox communities, as well as what can be designated as secular settlements, located mostly on the outskirts of Jerusalem, in the Jordan Valley, and in some urban hubs. The latter two types of settlements seem to attract young couples looking for affordable housing. Moreover, also within the religious Zionist sector, new divisions have formed in the last couple of decades that reflect both ideological and generational processes. Alongside the more established, bourgeois mainstream class of settlers emerged a stream that advocated for the integration of ultra-Orthodox practices and norms into the religious Zionists' lifestyle. Not coincidentally, these people were called "Hardalim," a Hebrew word that combines Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) and national (thus the English equivalent is ultra-Orthodox Zionists/nationalists). At the same time, the settlers' movement experienced the emergence of the hilltops youth, second- and third-generation settlers who formed numerous outposts, usually on hills surrounding existing settlements. Many of these outposts adopted a combination of new-age religious lifestyle and were a source of attraction to religious Zionist youth. Facing a growing demographic and ideological heterogeneity, it is safe to assume that the settlers' movement will find it increasingly difficult to operate as a unified sector in the future and thus needs to redefine its core interests and how these can relate to different settlers' communities.

Finally, the increasing decentralization of the Palestinian violence (i.e., the growing tendency for the violence to be perpetrated by local networks with limited connection to established Palestinian organizations, or by lone wolves) presents some new challenges in terms of securing the safety of settlers, as well as in maintaining functioning relationships with the Palestinian population.

In conclusion, the new challenges that the settlers' community faces will facilitate the development of new mechanisms of political activism, as well as a new ethos that will enable them to mobilize the different groups of settlers for the accomplishment of joint goals.

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CHAPTER 32

RELIGION IN ISRAELI POLITICS

GUY BEN-PORAT

IN his programmatic book *The Jewish State*, Theodor Herzl, one of the founding fathers of Zionism, outlined a secular state in which religion is kept out of politics and remains a private matter and an individual choice: “Shall we end by having a theocracy? No. Faith unites us, knowledge gives us freedom. We shall therefore prevent any theocratic tendencies from coming to the fore on the part of our priesthood. We shall keep our priests within the confines of their temples in the same way as we shall keep our professional army within the confines of their barracks” (Herzl, 1972, p. 57). Politics and religion, however, as Herzl was soon to discover, could not be separated, and political compromises were part and parcel of first the Zionist movement and then the new state. It would be safe to predict that religion, religious parties, and religious institutions will remain significant in the Israeli political landscape.

Religious freedom is a basic tenet of democracy, whether church and state are strictly separated or religion is given symbolic preference and social authority. In Israel, the presence of religion in politics and its power over private and public life suggest that it will not be able to match liberal democracies elsewhere (Neuberger, 1999). The debate over the status of *halakhah* (Jewish religious law) in the conduct of public and private life has occupied the largely secular Zionist movement from its very beginnings. The secular–religious debate became more concrete and acute, first once the pre-state entity became a sovereign state faced with essential questions relating to daily life and the nature of the public domain, and second when the institutions established in early statehood to resolve the dilemmas could no longer provide solutions in the face of a changed reality (see also the chapter by Cohen in this volume).

As a social phenomenon that extends beyond individual belief and private spiritual preferences, religion is always political to some degree and accordingly requires a general theory of its political roles and its politicization (Wald, Silverman, & Fridy, 2005). Religious institutions in search of power can become “political,” politicians in search of support can turn to religion, and religious and political institutions can compete as both

claim to give authoritative answers to important questions in terms of “oughts” and commands (Heclo, 2001). The study of religion and politics in Israel shows a complex picture of secularization and religious resurgence. Rather than adopt an exclusive religious or secular identity, the majority of Jewish Israelis continue to maintain at least some beliefs, identities, and practices that can be described as religious, often alongside secular ones. Regardless of the meaning individuals attribute to their desires, choices, demands, and actions, in practice those may defy religious authority. This dynamic reality, described sometimes as “postsecular,” presents challenges to countries’ political systems when the old rules of the game cannot contain new and often conflicting demands. In Israel this dynamic reality has stood in stark contrast to a deadlocked political system unable either to maintain the old rules of the game or to establish new agreed-upon rules (see also the chapter by Hazan in this volume).

This chapter begins with the historical foundations of religion and state in Israel, namely the formation of the status quo agreement, its roots in the pre-state period, the compromises between religious and secular parties, and the specific arrangements they included. In the second part the contradictions and tensions within the status quo are discussed. The third part presents the social and economic changes and the new developments in the 1990s and discusses their impact on religious and secular politics. Finally, in the fourth part the potential for new arrangements and compromises is examined.

STATUS QUO: POLITICAL COMPROMISES

As a secular ideology, Zionism challenged religious authority that held the view that Jewish redemption would come about with the advent of the Messiah. National revival implied a break with the past and the attempt to replace Judaism, a religion identified with the old world, with Jewishness, a modern identity based on culture, ethnicity, a historical sense of belonging to the Jewish people, and a proactive approach toward the future. But as a national ideology, religion was indispensable to Zionism as a marker of boundaries and a mobilizing force, and compromises had to be made. These compromises, often described as “consociational” (Lijphart, 1969), enabled the political system to resolve religious conflicts and maintain stability and democracy (Don-Yehia, 2000).

The visit of the UN Special Committee on Palestine in 1947 was the trigger that set off a series of compromises between the Zionist movement, dominated by the Labor Party (MAPAI) and the religious parties, first the Ultra-Orthodox Agudat Israel and soon after with the National Religious Party, the Mizrahi (NRP). The UN Committee was formed to make recommendations about the future of Palestine following Britain’s request to end its mandate. In order to ensure that the religious party would support the Zionist position, a letter was sent by David Ben-Gurion, chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, that became a cornerstone of religious–secular arrangements known as the status quo. The letter stated that the future Jewish state would maintain rules of Kashrut

(Jewish dietary restrictions) in state kitchens, declare the Sabbath an official day of rest, maintain Jewish family values, and acknowledge religious rights to separate education.

The commitments in the letter were somewhat vague, but the status quo laid down a basic agreement on the Jewish character of the state of Israel that enabled secular and religious political elites to formulate compromises and avoid conflicts (Don-Yehia, 2000). After independence, the status quo was formalized and developed, stating duties, obligations, and jurisdictions. As promised, the government granted autonomy to the ultra-Orthodox school system. In addition, ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students (high learning institutions) could defer the obligatory military service and in practice exempt themselves from duty. Three other components had a more direct effect on the lives of secular Jews: the designation of Saturday, the Sabbath, as the day of rest, with the mandatory closing of stores and public services; the required observance of Jewish dietary rules (*kashrut*) in public institutions; and the Orthodox monopoly over burial, marriage, and divorce.

The status quo operated as a guideline for religious-secular negotiations during the first decades of statehood (Susser & Cohen, 2000). Beyond legislation and formal institutions regulating private lives, the status quo included informal institutions that helped overcome disagreements. These included refraining from formal and binding decisions over controversial matters, favoring of coalition partnerships over majority rule, allowing religious autonomy in specific areas, and attempting to shift disputes from the national-political to judicial and local arenas. The formation of the status quo and its ability to remain effective for almost three decades are often attributed to the pragmatism of the leading political parties, their concrete interests, and their response to the general (Jewish) public desire for compromise.

The leading political parties, as well as the majority of Jewish Israelis, were occupied with challenges of state building and concerned with external security threats that marginalized secular-religious differences. The approach adopted was known as *mamlahtiyut*, an ethos that placed the state at the center of the collective life of the Jewish nation and upheld the functionality of the status quo for reinforcement of consensus with respect to the state. The consensus was secured by political interests and cooperation between the dominant Labor Party and the major religious national party (the Mizrahi). This cooperation allowed the Labor Party to dominate foreign policy and security policy in return for Orthodox monopoly over significant aspects of public life. For the Ultra-Orthodox Party, the exemptions from military service, autonomy for its educational system, and gradually also funding for its institutions were enough to ensure its implicit support for the state.

The majority of nonreligious Israelis were generally supportive of the compromises, as they continued to relate to codes, values, symbols, and a collective memory that could hardly be separated from Jewish religion (Kimmerling, 2004, p. 354). The secular idea of a Jewish state referred to ethnicity or culture, but religion was called up as the gatekeeper to provide the criteria for inclusion and exclusion (Ben-Porat, 2000; Ram, 2008). The gap between religious groups and a large proportion of the secular population was narrowed not only by common symbols but also by the widespread shared loyalty to the

idea of a “Jewish state” and the instrumentality of religion for maintaining its boundaries. Consequently, both symbolic and practical political considerations kept Jewish religion inside the political life of the nation and the state, facilitating political compromises.

STATUS QUO: CHALLENGED

The status quo emerged in a period when the compromises it entailed were feasible thanks to favorable political circumstances, concrete political interests, a desire for consensus, and an ambivalent secularism. This institutional framework, however, was subjected to challenges and criticisms because religious–secular compromises had their price, especially for some groups. State laws provided religious orthodoxy with authority over major milestones in society, ranging from marriage and divorce to burial. Secular groups and individuals who felt disadvantaged or wronged by the Orthodox order, and those opposed in principle to the religious monopoly, all voiced their resentments and demands. Needless to say, this compromise among the Jewish majority excluded the non-Jewish minority, which remained marginal in the political process.

Ideologically, secular Israelis who called for freedom—described in terms of the separation of religion from the state, freedom from religion, or religious freedom—were a minority, represented by small liberal parties, but they were able to make their presence felt through civil society and extra-parliamentary politics. Secular challenges to the status quo in the early years of statehood were few, and mostly local and short-lasting. One exception was the League against Religious Coercion, formed in the 1950s, which developed a comprehensive agenda. Assisted by the organizational resources of the *kibbutzim*, the league struggled for civil marriage, easing the requirements for conversion to Judaism, and ending the restrictions on activities on Shabbat (“Shabbat without chains”). In 1955 the league submitted a petition with 100,000 signatures to the Knesset (parliament), demanding a referendum on the authorization of civil marriage (Tzur, 2001, p. 212). The league, however, failed to mobilize the general public, and its cooperation with the secular parties did not yield any significant results, either. Its activities gradually declined until it disappeared after the 1967 war.

The majority of Israelis, including those who defined themselves as nonreligious, took part in religious rituals during holidays (Passover) or private events (marriage, burial, and circumcision) and accepted restrictions on marriage and burial choices, activities on the Sabbath, and the sale of nonkosher meat. These were all perceived as constitutive to the Jewish character of the state or their own Jewish identity, as part of a necessary compromise between religious and secular, or simply as an issue of minor importance that did not affect their everyday lives enough to justify its politicization. Jewish Orthodoxy, therefore, acted as what Grace Davie (2007, p. 5) described as a vicarious religion: “performed by an active minority but on the behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but, quite clearly, approve of what the minority is doing.” The role religion played in private lives and its role as a gatekeeper of

the national boundaries rendered the possibility of separating state and religion unlikely, even for those who described themselves as “nonreligious.”

In the 1990s three major changes began to undermine the foundations of the status quo: globalization and consumer culture, immigration from the former Soviet Union (FSU), and more assertive nonreligious groups that offered new interpretations of Jewish identity (see also the chapter by Ram in this volume). The modest collectivist ethos and the limited material resources available in early statehood had provided a protective shield for the status quo. Conversely, globalization and economic growth that took off in the 1990s introduced new incentives and preferences. New lifestyles rendered the restrictive arrangements of the status quo difficult to maintain. Individualism, hedonism, and consumerism began to organize Israeli middle-class daily life (Carmeli & Applebaum, 2004); the desire for new experiences and the new leisure patterns—shopping on the Sabbath or eating nonkosher food—were often incompatible with the religious restrictions of the status quo. For religious people, also influenced by consumer culture, the religious rules held firm, although some challenges to religious authority have emerged more recently, in relation to the use of Internet or cell phones, for example.

The million immigrants who arrived in Israel from the FSU between 1989 and 2000 were not only more secular than their Israeli peers (Ben-Rafael, 2007; Leshem, 2001), but many of them, due to intermarriage in the FSU, did not meet the Orthodox criteria for Jewishness (Ben-Rafael, 2007). Consequently, immigrants were granted citizenship under the Law of Return (1970)¹ but were not considered Jewish by the Orthodox establishment² unless they went through an Orthodox conversion process. The sheer scale of this immigration produced a critical mass of demand for Russian culture and imported products, including pork. Russian food stores selling nonkosher and other imported food products were established across the country (see also the chapter by Willen & Zawdu in this volume). The status quo agreements and the Orthodox monopoly caused considerable difficulties for the immigrants, especially for those not recognized as Jews; among other difficulties they experienced, they could not marry in Israel, which strengthened the demand for change.

Ideational developments also took a new turn, challenging the Orthodox monopoly and demanding that alternative Jewish identities be recognized by the state and treated on an equal footing to Jewish Orthodoxy. This included Reform and Conservative Judaism, initially small and based mainly among immigrants from English-speaking countries, but with substantial backing from their related communities in the United States. This backing enabled them not only to function without government funding but also to expand and reach out to native Israelis. An additional set of alternatives known as secular or cultural Judaism developed in the 1990s. The open and critical reading of texts and, more important, the reinterpretation of rituals and commandments directly challenged religious orthodoxy and the status quo.

Thus, while a minority of secular Israelis were occupied in a cultural and political struggle, for many Israelis secularization was about lifestyle and practical decisions related to everyday life. Religious authority, in the form of the rabbinate and affiliated institutions, however, was losing its authority not only because of the secular demands for religious

freedom or practical individual decisions but also because of a tarnished image. Allegations of corruption, insensitivity, rigidity, and poor service were often made against religious authorities and incorporated in the demands of secular entrepreneurs for change.

STATUS QUO: DEFENSE AND MORE CHALLENGES

The status quo was challenged not only by changes associated with secularization, but also by religious groups, who had become more confident and sought not only to defend the status quo against secular encroachment, but also to strengthen religious presence in politics and society. On the Haredi side, the challenge emerged from the growing power of Agudat Israel, the recipient of the original status quo letter, and the rise of a new party, the Sephardic Ultra-Orthodox Party (Shas). The National Religious Party, the other partner to the status quo, also gained new powers and a new national mission.

The fear from the Zionist state and the disdain from Zionism among Haredim was replaced gradually with accommodation and political involvement to promote and protect their interests, while keeping the required distance from secular society and maintaining the boundaries. The political status of Agudat Israel was bolstered by the fact that since the late 1970s the two major parties, Labor and Likud, could not form a coalition without them. This position allowed them various political gains: state funding for their independent and unsupervised school system and higher learning institutes and more deferrals of military service for young men. Haredi politicians have also accepted official roles on parliamentary committees and even ministerial positions. This matched other development, with Haredim stepping out of their enclave for education, work, leisure, and volunteering in national institutions. In general, Haredim began to embrace elements of Israeli society and “ratcheted down the tensions with state and civil society” (Stadler, 2012, p. 40).

The formation of the Shas party, representing religious Mizrahim (Jews who emigrated from Muslim countries and their descendants), was another significant change in ultra-Orthodox politics. Combining ethnicity and religiosity, Shas advocated a return to tradition against the secularization forced on Mizrahi immigrants. Becoming a significant political force, the party was successful in channeling Mizrahi resentment while remaining loyal to Jewish unity and the state (Peled, 1998). Shas built an extensive network of educational and welfare institutions, constituting a substitute for the receding welfare state and thereby reinforcing the party’s standing with both the state, which used it as an intermediary, and its voters, who became more dependent on this party network (G. Levi & Amreich, 2001). Shas became an important player in promoting religious (and antisecular) Jewish identity. The party’s constituency was not necessarily Haredi, as

its voters often identified with its social and ethnic message, but a vote for Shas was a vote for a more religious state or even for a *halakhic* state (Susser & Cohen, 2000, p. 120).

Unlike Ashkenazi Haredi parties, Shas entered Israeli politics not only to defend the interests of a specific public and advance the cause of Jewish *halakhic* legislation, but also to implement a far-reaching change in the social agenda and the Israeli collective identity (Ben-Rafael & Leon, 2006, p. 309). If at the outset Shas aimed at rectifying the discrimination against Mizrahim (see also the chapter by Smootha in this volume), from the 1990s onward the party championed a religious revolution and a spiritual revival aimed at changing the balance of power between the secular majority and the religious minority. Shas's meteoric rise to prominence meant that it became a major player in Israeli politics, a role further enhanced by the party representatives' willingness or ambitions to serve as ministers in government, a step that the Ashkenazi Haredi parties had refused to entertain. The appointment of ministers from the Shas party often led to its becoming embroiled in disputes with secular politicians, whether these involved the Ministry of the Interior, in which the minister responsible had to deal with granting citizenship or implementing the Law of Return, or the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, which exercises authority in matters relating to business operation on the Sabbath.

Religious Zionism was part of the Zionist movement, but until the late 1960s, it settled for the secondary role of managing the religious institutions and protecting their monopoly. A younger generation of religious Zionists who took power after the war of 1967, however, was no longer willing to accept its marginal role. Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful), which appeared on the scene during the 1970s, constituted an attempt by the religious Zionists to make headway into a position of leadership. Religious Zionists came to believe that secular Zionism had "fulfilled its mission and finished its role" (Karpel, 2003, p. 15), and it was now their turn to assume leadership and settle the new territories occupied in the war to ensure they would become part of a larger Israel.

The settlement of the territories (see also the chapter by Pedahzur & Perliger in this volume)—areas with historical and religious significance—was for religious Zionists the fulfillment of religious commandments and national duty. The national revival that Gush Emunim offered replicated many of the symbols and practices of secular Zionism, but instilled them with religious meaning. Hiking the land, community life, Hebrew culture, and especially pioneering became the markers of the new movement (Ben-Porat, 2000). Religious Zionism sought not only to ensure Israel's hold on the territories, but also to shape and reshape Israeli society and strengthen the Jewish component of the state. The growing presence of national-religious men in the military, including in high command posts, created new demands and frictions on various issues, including attempts to prevent the expansion of roles for women in the army. In 2008 a new party, the Jewish Home, was formed, replacing the NRP. The new party wanted to extend the reach of the NRP, so it included nonreligious (but right-wing) representatives and adopted a comprehensive national and neoliberal agenda.

THE END OF THE STATUS QUO

Demographic and economic changes on the one hand, and more assertive secular and religious publics on the other hand, undermined the status quo. The formal and informal agreements that rested on a common (Jewish) cause and political parties able and willing to forge pragmatic compromises gave way to competition and struggles. Marriage, burial, conversion, military service, business, and leisure activities on the day of rest were part of a growing list of topics of disagreement between the religious and secular and contributed to a widening rift. New agreements answering the changes and demands had to be crafted, but an ongoing political crisis rendered compromise impossible. The political standstill was not unique to questions of religion but was indicative of a deeper and wider political crisis and an unstable political system.

The institutional power of the status quo was derived from the political context in which it was created, the ideological consensus, and the dominance of the Labor Party that enabled constructive compromises. The party's dominance, however, gradually eroded until its final collapse in the 1977 elections, when it was defeated for the first time. Labor's partner in the compromise, the NRP, was no longer satisfied with simply maintaining the religious status quo but aspired to determine the country's borders, and Labor was no longer its preferred partner. The right-wing Likud, the successor of the Labor Party, was able to form governing coalitions (with the NRP and other partners) but could not reproduce the dominance of the Labor Party and the stability it had fostered. Elections from 1980 onward ended with the two blocs almost tied and in need of bringing the ultra-Orthodox, Haredi, parties into the coalition and accommodating new demands.

The politics of accommodation that characterized the status quo was replaced by a "politics of crisis" that undermined stability, split the political system (Susser & Cohen, 2000), and eventually rendered it ineffective. The political stalemate and the inability of the government to produce efficient and stable policy decisions encouraged citizens and political entrepreneurs to seek alternative courses of action—legal, semilegal, and even illegal—outside the political system. Secular resentment against what was perceived as infringement of religion on public lives and the exemption of ultra-Orthodox men from military service was channeled into political action and extra-parliamentary activity. Opposition to "religious coercion" and support for pluralism became major issues for the secular parties and the parties representing immigrants from the FSU, all competing for the "secular vote."

Political parties with a pronounced secular agenda demanded curbing the Haredi parties' powers and promised to protect liberal freedoms. The FSU immigrants voted in large numbers for "Russian" parties that combined a hawkish foreign policy with a secular agenda focused on immigrants' needs. Meretz, a left-wing dovish party and home for many secular Israelis, was challenged in 1999 by the new Shinui (Change) Party, which presented a more radical and focused secular agenda and in 2003 became the third largest party in the Knesset. The competition for secular votes became more radical, but

after its initial success, Shinui all but disappeared, and Meretz lost much of its support, shrinking from twelve to three or four parliamentary seats. Meretz, a liberal and left-wing party, was not the only party competing for secularist votes. Yesh Atid (There is a Future), a centrist secular party, became the dominant voice of the Israeli bourgeoisie, and Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel our Home) captured FSU votes (see the chapter by Shapira & Rahat in this volume).

New Sites of Religious–Secular Politics

The decline of secular parties did not indicate a change in secular frustrations but rather, similar to the trajectory described previously, a loss of confidence in the political system and its ability to promote change through formal legislative processes. Frustrations, needs, and desires consequently have found expression in alternative arenas. This new form of politics, described by Ulrich Beck as “sub-politics” (Beck, 1997), is a noninstitutionalized form of politics “outside and beyond the representative institutions of the political system of nation-states,” which may be replacing traditional forms of participation (Beck, 1996, p. 18). Practices of subpolitics can be traced outside the formal political system of the state—in supermarkets, schools, media, the streets (Beck, 1997), and anywhere citizens seek to fill the political vacuum and take responsibility for matters in their everyday, individual-oriented life arena that cuts across the public and private spheres (Holzer & Sorensen, 2001).

The failure of the political system to adapt the status quo to the changed reality encouraged the rise of secular entrepreneurs who acted outside the political system and filled the political vacuum. The entrepreneurs—ideological atheists, advocates of Jewish renewal, FSU immigrants, or business owners—identified the needs, desires, and demands against the restrictions of the status quo and the opportunities to challenge the restrictions through different actions and services. These entrepreneurs were the agents of change that challenged religious authority institutionalized in the status quo. Motivations ranged from political-ideological (promotion of civil marriage) to economic (opening businesses on Sabbath) goals. These choices and strategies, based on different combinations of ideological or economic motives, at times consciously challenged the status quo with a clear political objective (civil marriage or burial). Many other times, however, these were individual choices that took advantage of opportunities (private marriage or burial services) and had no political motives.

Secularization

The judicial system became an alternative for secular entrepreneurs frustrated with political parties that failed to provide the needed solutions or refrained altogether from making decisions on significant questions regarding the role of religion in public life (see the chapter by Hofnung & Wattad in this volume). Questions such as civil marriage

or the draft exemption of Orthodox men were pushed aside by politicians in power, who preferred to remain on the sidelines rather than anger religious or secular voters. The weakness of the political system meant that the courts soon became an alternative institution to which the secular public could turn in hopes of getting a clear and binding decision. Individuals and groups appealed to the courts initially requesting a solution to concrete problems, but later these submissions were expanded to include questions of principle. The Supreme Court was an agent of liberal values (Mautner, 2011) that, beginning in the 1980s, adopted an activist approach. This approach recognized standing for a “public petitioner,” who raises an issue directly relevant to the rule of law or a violation of basic civil liberties or who blows the whistle on government corruption. In the same vein, the court extended its jurisdiction from protection of concrete, personal rights to ensuring the realization of general public values and reduced the scope of issues considered nonjudicable (Mautner, 2011, pp. 57–58).

According to its critics, the Supreme Court amassed extensive powers and, in its intervention in religious–secular affairs, became a route for bypassing the politics of accommodation (Susser & Cohen, 2000). Conversely, defenders of the Supreme Court argued that its interventions were inevitable owing to the vacuum left by the collapse of the status quo and the inertia of the political system. Irrespective of whether the court aspired to attain power or was drawn against its wishes into the vacuum of religious–secular politics, the Supreme Court became a key player in religious–secular interactions in Israel. Secular activists who perceived the court as friendly to their liberal demands attempted to generate change by means of court rulings.

Two basic laws with a constitutional status, passed by the Knesset in 1992, provided the court with greater capacity to intervene in political life. The Law on Human Dignity and Freedom and the Law of Freedom of Occupation were part of what was described as a “constitutional revolution” that supposedly took place in the 1990s. Although this may not have been the intention of the government and the Knesset, these basic laws granted the court the right of judicial review and the possibility to make decisions in cases in which the basic laws and new legislation seemed to clash. In actual practice, the basic laws had fairly limited power; the rights they promised could be infringed by new laws, as long as these did not contradict the values upheld by Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, were passed for a valid purpose, and did not diverge from what was absolutely necessary to serve this purpose (Shafir & Peled, 2002).

The courts became an important arena for secular groups and individuals that appealed for the right of businesses to operate on the Sabbath, and for the right to import nonkosher meat, marry outside the rabbinical jurisdiction, or be buried in a civil burial ceremony. But in spite of several victories in the courts, the overall result of the legal struggles not only was limited in scope but also turned out to be a two-edged sword. First, the government had the last word, as it could respond to court rulings with counter-legislation that annulled the court’s ruling. Second, the growing involvement of the Supreme Court in what were previously considered political questions alienated it from important religious groups, which saw the court as a secular, antireligious entity. This religious discontent exploded in a mass demonstration in 1999 against the Supreme

Court and was followed by opinion polls that indicated a significant decrease in the religious population's confidence in the Supreme Court (Arian et al., 2003, p. 189). The resentment was also translated into various attempts to restrict the court's power and guarantee the supremacy of the government and the parliament.

Neither the formal political arena nor the courts was necessarily the "place" where the new rules of the game were shaped. Rather, secularization advanced by actions, small and large, that circumvented the status quo rather than directly challenging it. Frustrations with the political system and declining faith in political change resulted in growing apathy and withdrawal, but also in various initiatives and alternative courses of action. Such actions had two important advantages for secular entrepreneurs over formal political channels. First, they replicated other initiatives and matched the political culture that had developed in Israel, in which informal solutions to problems were found more productive. Second, they were able to benefit from the neoliberal economic policies and the freedom of choice these policies supposedly offered.

A NEW STATUS QUO?

Changes in marriage patterns in Israel are indications not only of secularization but also of the erosion of the consensus associated with the status quo and the inability of the political system to forge new agreements. Among Western countries, Israel is alone in not allowing civil marriage and in having personal law governed exclusively by religious law. Section 2 of the Rabbinical Courts Jurisdiction (Marriage and Divorce) Law of 1953 provides: "Marriages and divorces of Jews shall be performed in Israel in accordance with Jewish religious law." Officially, marriage laws have hardly changed, and the Orthodox monopoly over marriage and divorce remains intact. In practice, however, the large number of FSU immigrants not recognized as Jewish, an active LGBT community that demands recognition, and growing demand by Israelis for alternative marriage services have created alternatives for marriage and new family patterns. The latter, included also native Israelis legible to marry in the rabbinate, who, based on secular identity or self-expression values, insist on providing their own input into the ceremony or dismissing the Orthodox ritual entirely.

Such changes were aided by Supreme Court decisions (from recognition of marriage abroad to economic rights for nonmarried couples) and by an Israeli public sympathetic to the needs and desires of different groups. The support for civil marriage in Israel has grown in recent years; about 63 percent of the Jewish population expresses support for civil marriage, and only 25 percent opposes it. The support, obviously, is very strong among those who describe themselves as "secular," but even among those who describe themselves as "traditional" there is strong support for civil marriage (Ben-Porat, 2013, p. 75). But attempts to amend existing rules and adapt them to the changing environment have failed. Bills proposed by nongovernmental organizations to introduce civil marriage and official recognition of religiously mixed, single-parent, and same-sex families

have received minimal political support. Political parties purporting to represent the immigrants from the FSU have made promises to resolve the difficulties of couples not recognized as Jewish, but in practice have done little to rectify the situation.

In July 2007 Daniel Friedmann, the minister for justice, and Rabbi Shlomo Amar, the Sephardic chief rabbi at the time, signed a draft document of a law that would allow a couple to marry in Israel in a civil procedure, but only if both partners were not recognized as Jews according to *halakhah* (Ben-Porat, 2013, p. 81). The supporters of this law saw it as an important compromise, and even a precedent, in that it essentially broke the taboo of the rabbinate's opposition to civil marriage. On the other hand, its critics considered the compromise proposal contemptible, as it provided a response for only a small proportion of the difficulties encountered in this area, ignored the public who wanted non-Orthodox marriage, relegated the secular or non-Orthodox religious alternatives to secondary status, and left the Orthodox monopoly fundamentally unchanged.

More comprehensive reforms faced stronger opposition. The Knesset committee was on the verge of submitting a bill that would allow couples to choose between a civil procedure of registration and a religious ceremony at the rabbinate. Whereas secular politicians declared a "revolution," the Ashkenazi chief rabbi was quick to warn that "the law endangers the unity of the people, breaks the strand of the generations and will result in the need to start keeping genealogical records." The Sephardi chief rabbi joined the fray, warning about the danger of the proposed bill: "Is the plague of assimilation occurring now around the world not enough for us?" (Ben-Porat, 2013, pp. 81–82). The bill was not submitted.

Attempts to regulate the Sabbath and find new compromises faced the same obstacles. The vague wording of the pre-state agreements had to be translated into formal rules and regulations after statehood. The new law (article 18a of the initial legislation of the State of Israel, Law and Administration Ordinance, 1948) again defined the Sabbath as the official "day of rest" but neither explicitly stated what was permitted or forbidden nor specified what sanctions would be imposed for violation of the rest day (Hacohen, 2002). The Working Hours and Rest Law in 1951 was more specific, stating that "unless stipulated otherwise in the regulations, the length of the weekly rest period for the worker is to be 36 consecutive hours. The rest day includes: For a Jew the Shabbat, while for non-Jewish citizens either Friday or Sunday according to his or her choice" (Ben-Porat, 2013, p. 182).

Opinion polls show the public's broad support for commerce on the Sabbath; this support is expressed directly in the profits of those companies doing business on the Sabbath. The vast majority of Israeli Jews agree that the Sabbath is a day of rest, different from other days, but the significance attributed to the day does not necessarily rule out shopping. A comprehensive survey carried out in 1999 found that between 48 and 55 percent of the Jews in Israel keep the Sabbath commandments and traditions, such as lighting candles and having a Sabbath dinner or Kiddush (sanctification with wine and bread), and a decisive majority described the Sabbath as a "family" day (S. Levi, Levinson, & Katz, 2002). The perception of the Sabbath as a family day means different things for religious and secular individuals. For the latter, it is also a day for leisure that

includes various activities, some of which contravene religious restrictions, including shopping.

Legislative initiatives for a new Sabbath law that would redefine the rules of the game have failed. The different initiatives adopted a largely similar formula, replicated in other arenas. First, it established the universal importance of the Sabbath, and second, it separated cultural from commercial activities in order to allow the former and restrict the latter. Proposals, usually the result of cooperation between religious and secular members of the Knesset, emphasized the uniqueness of the Sabbath in Israel and the importance of the state's Jewish character, but also integrated socioeconomic justifications for a new Sabbath law. Many secular ideologists had no trouble identifying with issues relating to the rights of those forced to work on the Sabbath, the damage done to small businesses, and the longing for a day's rest free from consumerism and dedicated to the family or quality leisure and culture. However, the secularization of the Sabbath continued its momentum almost entirely within the economic realm and was based on the entrepreneurs' economic considerations.

More recent developments, however, indicate that secularization has to a large extent been superficial and fragile. The continuing inability to change marriage laws is not only indicative of religion's institutional power, backed by religious parties, but also of the fact that the Orthodox monopoly is accepted by the majority of Jewish Israelis. Similarly, while for many Israelis trading on the Sabbath was seen as a *fait accompli*, an initiative in 2018 by government ministers and city mayors attempted, if with limited success and against some opposition, to limit commerce on Sabbath through legislation and fines. A new word *HADATA*, meaning an attempt to de-secularize and make religious presence and authority stronger, was introduced to describe the changes. Secular or nonreligious Israelis, and the political parties representing them, claim that religious parties are attempting to change the status quo and impose religion and religious dictums upon them.

The fact that the changes described in the previous paragraphs—in the realm of marriage and in commerce on the Sabbath—evolved outside of the formal political processes does not mean that they do not impact political alignment and campaigns. Secularization and *HADATA* evoke hopes and concerns among the public and expected reactions of politicians. In the three election rounds of 2019–2020, the idea of a “secular coalition” was brought to the fore by two parties. Yisrael Beiteinu, led by Avigdor Lieberman, advocated the concept of a “liberal Israel,” targeting both its traditional base of FSU immigrants and secular right-wing Jewish Israelis. The slogan chosen, “Lieberman would keep Israel Liberal,” was directed against the ultra-Orthodox parties, promising to enforce military draft and cut funding to Yeshiva students described as “draft evaders” (*MISHTAMTIM*). Liberalism, in Lieberman's campaign, was less about a commitment to equality and individual rights and more about antireligious sentiments, as revealed by his statements against Arab citizens and their representative that he described as “terrorist supporters.”

The Blue and White party alliance, the main contender against the Likud, also adopted the idea of a “secular government,” hinting that the Likud and Netanyahu are held captive by the religious parties. This change of tactic in September 2019 (before,

the party attempted to reach out to the ultra-Orthodox parties in an attempt to break their commitment to the Likud) was hoped to strengthen support among nonreligious Israelis. These were perceived to be concerned with the potential expansion of religious power and aimed to take away voters from Yisrael Beiteinu and Meretz in order to ensure that the party alliance would be the largest party list after the elections. The envisioned secular government, led by it, was somewhat vague, as one of its members explained: "No one is excluded, a secular government is a Zionist, national and liberal government... a civic agenda in which government involvement in religious matters is minimal... religious institutions will no longer be the monopoly of the ultra-Orthodox... anyone accepting these guidelines is welcome to join" (<https://www.makorishon.co.il/news/170887/>).

The campaigns of both Yisrael Beiteinu and Blue and White tried to appeal to nonreligious voters, promising religious freedom, or more accurately, freedom from religion. Both had limited success. Religious parties, in response, vowed to protect religious mores and the status quo and strengthened their alignment with the Likud. The undecided results of the three rounds of elections seem to ensure that religious parties remain significant political players and that questions of religion and state are unlikely to be resolved in the near future.

CONCLUSION

Religious and secular politics were contained in the early years of statehood by an overarching consensus, secular ambivalence toward religion, and a political leadership able to reach the formal and informal agreements known as the status quo. The status quo was able to depoliticize many of the religious debates and questions, shifting them to the judicial realm, engaging them as local questions, and avoiding controversial decisions. The changes—demographic, sociocultural, and economic—that began in the 1980s and accelerated in the 1990s undermined the status quo. Secularization, with various demands and initiatives to lessen religious authority, and religious demands to maintain and strengthen that authority, rendered old compromises irrelevant and new ones difficult to achieve.

The repoliticization of religious questions, with new demands and needs, could not be resolved in either the political system, facing an ongoing governance crisis, or the legal system, constrained by legitimacy concerns that questioned its ability to intervene. Consequently, the political debates, and more important, political actions, shifted to other spheres, where entrepreneurial actions and individual decisions created alternatives. But while initiatives that circumvent rather than confront existing laws have created "secular spaces," largely privatized, where nonreligious Israelis can make their own choices, they have not resolved the major issues regarding the role of religion in Israeli public life. Moreover, the simultaneous growing power of religious institutions and parties has not only limited secularization and maintained strong power holds, but may

even reverse some of these developments. Political struggles for and against religious authority, inside and outside formal politics, are likely therefore to remain part of Israeli politics.

AUTHOR NOTE

This chapter is based on Guy Ben-Porat, *Between State and Synagogue, the Secularization of Contemporary Israel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

NOTES

1. The law grants Israeli citizenship to “the child or grandchild of a Jew, the spouse of a Jew, and the spouse of a Jewish child or grandchild.”
2. According to Jewish Orthodoxy, a Jew is “someone who was born to a Jewish mother, and who does not belong to another religion, or someone who converted to Judaism.”

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CHAPTER 33

THE MILITARY IN ISRAELI POLITICS

YORAM PERI

AMONG established democracies, Israel provides the clearest case of a society living in a state of constant conflict and never-ending war. Israel was born in war, and its nation-building process has developed during protracted warfare. Initially, power relations between Israel and its enemies forced its leaders to adopt the model of a Citizen's army. But even seventy years after its founding, and despite its clear military advantage over its adversaries, Israel, unlike most democratic states, has not adopted the model of an all-volunteer professional force.

While security considerations shaped the emergence of a "warrior society" during the early years of Israel's statehood, the situation has persisted due to cultural and ideological factors, along with the interests of power groups. Even those who hesitate to label Israel militaristic describe its highest value system in terms such as the "religion of security," "securitism," or "the security formula." They speak of "a society dominated by its security network," and even of "an army that has a state" (Sheffer et al., 2008). As securitization theory shows, an existential threat is not a given, uncontrollable, external circumstance, but rather a social construction that is the result of attitudes, beliefs, and assessments, fostered by the political and security elites and abetted by social elites (Barak & Sheffer, 2009; Lupovici, 2016).

In a society in which security is a supreme value, the military is elevated above all other organizations, and a process of ongoing indoctrination in all social spheres promotes the centrality of security, military service, and ultimately, militarism. Israelis consistently trust the military more than any other social institution. The military provides both material and symbolic rewards and attracts the country's talented young people into career service. After individuals are discharged, military service is converted into a civilian asset for both those individuals and social groups and becomes a resource for mobility into fields unrelated to security, including political leadership. The percentage of high-ranking reserve officers serving in parliament and government is higher in Israel than in any other democracy.

However, since the late twentieth century several processes have led to unprecedented tensions between civilian society and the military, the most important of which is the entrenchment of the military occupation in the Palestinian territories. Others include (a) changes in the nature of warfare, including the transition from industrial war to “new war”; (b) changes in the value systems of Israeli society; (c) changes in the role of the military as a player in the cultural struggle over collective identity; and (d) the deepening gap between the military and the civilian leadership. This chapter focuses on these five issues.

THE OCCUPATION IN THE TERRITORIES

Unlike praetorian armies, professional armies are not particularly fond of military occupation because it compels them to administer a system of civilian services and pacify the population—that is, to prevent any opposition to the occupation. These two tasks are very different from classic military functions. However, despite prevalent assessments in the summer of 1967, including within the military command echelons, it would appear that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) has overcome these two problems fairly well (Peri, 2017a).

On the other hand, the military was unable to overcome the third problem that an occupation regime poses to a professional army, and most especially, to a citizens’ army (see also the chapter by Perliger and Pedahzur in this volume). Ever since the IDF’s founding, the political and military elites have striven to present it as a national, apolitical, nonpartisan institution that operates according to universal criteria. Since 1967 the military has defined its role in the Territories in a similar vein: maintaining public order and ensuring the well-being and safety of all residents, in order to provide the political leadership with the flexibility required to make decisions regarding the fate of the Territories and the future of the Palestinians. The IDF’s top command has frequently reiterated these principles ever since the Six-Day War in 1967 and continued to do so even when the truth about its role could no longer be hidden. The military has clearly become a political tool that benefits Jews at the expense of Palestinians, and it acts not out of security considerations, but rather to enhance the Jewish colonization project, to ensure that if a diplomatic settlement is reached, Israel can extend its territory beyond the “Green Line.” Over the past two decades, moreover, the military has effectively, though not officially, abandoned its mandate as the sovereign power in the territories and essentially transferred that authority to the settlers.

Although the military’s apolitical image remained intact during the first twenty years following the Six-Day War, as the occupation persisted, and especially since the outbreak of the first Palestinian uprising (intifada) in 1987, that image has been tarnished. Various human rights organizations, journalists, and conscientious objectors were the first to protest the IDF’s policy, especially the behavior of its troops in the

Territories. Subsequently, criticism came also from the right side of the political map, as settler organizations and their supporters in parliamentary and extra-parliamentary groups began to criticize the army for being too soft on the Palestinians and discriminating against Jews.

These attacks, some are very violent, were directed at senior army officers, particularly in the Central Command. Major General Yair Naveh, for example, who is religiously observant, was referred to as an “informer”—the same religious category that had been applied to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin before his assassination in 1995.

Calls on soldiers and officers to refuse orders to evacuate settlements in the Territories grew stronger during the last decade of the twentieth century, when there was a real chance that diplomatic agreements would entail territorial concessions. Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and the physical confrontations between soldiers and settlers led to a crisis in the National Religious movement and to an escalation in civil-military tension. Following the redeployment, this camp developed two new approaches to the military. The first strategy was based on increasing its influence in the military by penetrating command posts and elite units and by volunteering for career service, particularly in the land-based army units, which are the most involved in the Territories. Indeed, nearly twenty years later National Religious soldiers now make up more than a third of the lower- and middle-ranking officers in the IDF. The other strategy took the opposite approach, adopting a reserved, even antagonistic, attitude toward the State of Israel and its institutions as represented, primarily, by the military (Hollinger & HersHKovitz, 2016).

Thus, since the beginning of the twenty-first century the occupation has led to an intensification of tension in civil-military relations in Israel. The military is engaged in political activity; as a result, it is subjected to criticism and opposition from civilian forces on the left and especially on the right. Only the ongoing indoctrination of the Israeli public, which continues to present the military as an apolitical, technical tool that merely implements policies of the political echelons, has prevented a full-fledged crisis from erupting (Peri, 2014).

Along with the fact that most Israelis view the occupation as necessary, since “there is no partner for negotiations,” this leads the public to believe that the military is carrying out a reasonable policy, as repeated Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) and Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) public opinion surveys illustrate. Once Israelis referred to the occupation as “enlightened”; now they insist that “the IDF is the most moral military in the world.” In any case, criticism of the military based on the occupation thus remains relegated to the fringes of Israeli society.

CHANGES IN THE NATURE OF WARFARE

Another significant factor in the change in society’s attitude toward the military in Israel has been transformation in the nature of warfare. The 1973 Yom Kippur War was

the IDF's last industrial war. Since then it has been involved exclusively in "new wars": asymmetrical or low-intensity conflicts, facing armed organizations rather than armies and fighters rather than soldiers. By their very nature, these wars do not bring about decisive outcomes, the concept of victory is irrelevant, and the media play a central role (Peri, 2017b). This new warfare is waged "among the people" (Ben Ari & Eran-Jona, 2015), and since civilians play a much more active role in these conflicts, this creates a different dynamic in the relationship between society and the military. The Israeli public has failed to understand the nature of this new warfare, and civilians continue to criticize the military for "failing to provide the goods." Indeed, since the Second Lebanon War, none of the wars in which Israel has engaged has brought about a clear victory, leading to public disappointment and a sense of missed opportunities.

CHANGES IN THE CIVILIAN VALUE SYSTEM

The IDF has come to realize that as the civilian value system in Israel has changed, it must find new sources of legitimacy. To do this, the IDF developed the Civil-Military Project. Its senior command has engaged in numerous deliberations with civilian organizations in order to understand and monitor the shifts in values and the changes in civilian society's attitudes toward the military, as well as to modify civilian perceptions.

One of the many documents the IDF has produced on these topics is *Changes in Israeli Society and Their Implications on Civil-Military Relations*, which states: "In its first decades, the State of Israel was defined as 'a nation in uniform,' in which security needs largely dictated citizens' ways of life, the dominance of the security ethos was enshrined, and the role of the military in Israeli society was significant and central" (Center for Behavioral Sciences, 2009). There was also a high level of social enlistment and legitimacy for the use of force. "Over the past two decades," however, "there have been changes in Israeli society and economy... [which have had an effect]... on the relationship between society and the military and on the public discourse surrounding the army." These include demographic changes; the emergence of a civil society; transition from a "melting pot" ideology to multiculturalism; the growing influence of the liberal ethos, which prioritizes the individual and his or her rights over the collectivist ethos; and the growing influence of a neoliberal economic ethos, expressed, among other ways, in the diminution of the welfare state and the public sector (Eran-Jona, 2009). "In the second decade of the twentieth century, social solidarity in Israeli society has attenuated; tribal allegiances and identity politics have intensified; and the power of the media, especially social media, has grown."¹

CHANGE IN THE MILITARY'S ROLE IN THE CULTURAL STRUGGLE OVER COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

The founding father of Israeli statism (*Mamlachtiyut*), David Ben Gurion, viewed the military not merely as a fighting organization, but also as a major instrument in molding the new nation (See the chapter by Ariely in this volume.) Thus, as the struggle between ethnic and cultural groups over forming the collective Israeli identity intensified, it was inevitable that the military would play an important part in it.

The military radio, for instance, became an arena in which the tensions between representatives of Ashkenazi and Mizrahi cultures played out. Indeed, over the last decade, Mizrahi and Mediterranean music have replaced much of the radio's traditional playlist, and the social, ethnic, and religious demographic of military radio reporters, broadcasters, and hosts is now more representative of groups such as Mizrahim, residents of development towns, and immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia.²

As noted, in its efforts to relocate itself "from the passengers' car to the locomotive," the National Religious movement's strategy to gain greater influence also targeted the IDF. Significantly larger numbers of soldiers belonging to this camp enlisted in elite units and assumed top leadership positions, particularly in field units that operate in the Territories. But the religious and political leaders of this movement have also used the military to increase their influence in shaping Israeli society as a whole and in recasting its very nature (Levy, 2015b).

The decision by Chief of Staff Benny Gantz in 2011 to change the wording of the prayer recited since the establishment of the IDF at military memorial services illustrates the struggle over Israeli collective identity and the increased influence of religious agents. The phrase, "May Israel remember its sons and daughters," had been previously replaced with religious terminology, "May God remember His sons and daughters" (Harel, 2011). However, after some twelve years, during which the IDF systematically gave in to the forces of greater religiosity, oppositional voices prevailed, and Gantz was forced to rescind his decision (Ehrlich, 2016).

Students of civil-military relations in the United States use the term "gap" to describe the rift in the relationship between the two spheres. This relates to differences in the composition of the military and civilian elites, in terms of their disparate worldviews, party preferences, and systems of belief and opinions. These scholars have further determined that the existence of such a gap undermines the legitimacy of the military, damages civilian control, weakens the cohesiveness of the military, and delivers a critical blow to the military's ability to operate effectively (Szayna et al., 2007).

In its desire to prevent further deepening of the gap between civilian society and the IDF and to preserve the military's legitimacy, the IDF command has taken steps to adapt

the military to changes in the culture and values of civilian society. The liberal approach to gender equality, which the IDF adopted due to changing norms in civilian society, has been particularly notable. Similarly important have been changes in policies against sexual harassment, although these came later and more slowly.

However, these attempts conflict with the growing influence of conservative religious groups. The military was faced with an even greater challenge when it discovered that its own value system was out of sync with large swathes of Israeli society. That is what happened during the trial of Elor Azaria in 2016, a soldier serving in the Territories, who was caught on camera killing a terrorist in Hebron, eleven minutes after the terrorist had been mortally wounded and was lying on the ground.

This incident made it obvious that the value system that had spread across civil society stood in stark contrast to the “IDF spirit” and basic principles of military ethics. Orders of the IDF general staff state explicitly that “purity of arms” means that it is forbidden to shoot a neutralized enemy if he no longer presents a danger, even if he is a terrorist who was about to attack Israelis. Nevertheless, more than two-thirds of Israelis adopted the attitude advocated by the traditional Jewish proverb, “He who comes to kill you, rise and kill first,” an approach promoted by Rabbis and populist nationalists and religious politicians who supported the soldier.

Thus, the position of the IDF’s high command and the military advocate general concerning the incident contrasted sharply with the attitudes of the majority of the public and engendered active opposition from various political, religious, and nationalist groups, and not only the extreme ones. Hundreds of thousands of shekels were raised through social media in support of the soldier, who was described as “a hero, not a criminal.”

Chief of Staff Gadi Eizenkot declared that it was necessary to follow military orders, even in the war against terror, and Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon warned against turning the military into a “gang.” In a speech delivered on May 5, 2016, on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day, Deputy Chief of Staff Yair Golan reminded the audience about soldiers of Germany in the 1930s and warned against “xenophobia, intolerance, violence, and moral decline.” In contrast, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, members of his cabinet, and other politicians, who were more in tune with deep-rooted trends among the general public, adopted the latter’s position and criticized the military leadership. Members of the Knesset appeared in court to express support for Azaria. In the public arena, this criticism culminated in accusations of treason and calls for the dismissal of the top military leadership.

The prime Minister subsequently fired Defense Minister Ya’alon, who had expressed and defended the position of the top military leadership. The military tribunal found the soldier guilty, but in the face of public pressure, it reduced his sentence. Nevertheless, the prime minister and many members of the Knesset signed a petition asking the president to pardon him. This incident, which marked one of the lowest points in the deteriorating relationship between Israeli society and the military since the founding of the state, underscored the severity of the rift. On July 16, 2016, Chief of Staff Eizenkot told the Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, “The loss of public trust in the military is more dangerous than any external threat” (Tibon, 2016). He has reiterated

this many times during his tenure and repeated it in a television interview marking the twenty-second anniversary of the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin.

THE DEEPENING GAP BETWEEN THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERSHIPS

The Azaria incident also revealed the depth of the gap between the military and political leaderships with regard to policy toward the Palestinians and the nature of the fight against Palestinian resistance.³ The military, which operates according to professional considerations, believes that a softer approach to the Palestinians will lessen their support for terror, while the government, motivated by political and ideological considerations, views those who espouse these ideas as left-wingers and even traitors. The military criticism of the policies adopted by Prime minister Netanyahu's government has reached an apex during the Knesset Elections in 2020's, when officers described Netanyahu as a "threat to Israel's security".

MANIFESTATIONS OF THE CHANGES IN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

The changes in Israeli society over the last few decades discussed in the previous sections have led to a change in society's attitude toward the military. Several phenomena are especially significant, and these are discussed in more detail here.

The Military Has Lost Its Universal and Apolitical Status

As a result of the core debates within Israeli society regarding the occupation and the settlements, the peace process, the future of the Territories, and the fate of the Palestinians; and due to the military's unavoidable involvement in these issues, the IDF has lost its apolitical image and status (Drori, 2008). The situation is so dire that on July 27, 2016, the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee published a unanimous decision calling for "the IDF to be kept out of the political debate, so as not to damage trust in it."

Heightened Criticism of the Military in the Media

The Israeli media continue to promote the "religion of security" and the military ethos; at the same time, ever since the Lebanon War of 1982, it has also begun to be critical of

the military. Ostensibly, there would seem to be a contradiction between these two positions, but deconstruction of the criticism published in the media reveals a complex picture that resolves this puzzle: The media's criticism is instrumental rather than substantive (Peri, 2008) and is intended to confirm the military's role rather than to challenge it (Neiger, Zanberg, & Meyers, 2005). Furthermore, criticism is directed at the military as a public organization and not as a fighting institution (Eran-Jona, 2015).

In other words, the media criticize the military as an organization, focusing on management, waste of resources, behavioral norms, and so forth. At the same time, the media continue to promote a positive attitude toward the military and militarism by presenting the IDF as the only fighting organization that can be counted on to face the external enemy and defend Israel. Media criticism is specific but never confronts military logic and does not doubt the preference for the military way in Israeli politics and culture.

The Changing Nature of Trust in the Military

The IDF still tops the scale of trust in comparison with all other national institutions, and willingness to enlist in service in times of emergency remains very high (Israeli, 2018). During the Protective Edge military operation in 2014, some 30 percent more combat troops signed up than were actually drafted.⁴ Some 75 percent of the Israeli public believes that the military is doing its job well (Hermann et al., 2017). In a different survey, respondents rated the operational fighting abilities of the military greater than 4 out of 5, with a similar rating awarded to its moral behavior during operational activity (Hermann et al., 2016). In contrast, the military received a lower grade (only 3 out of 5) with regard to its budgetary operations (Hermann & Yaar, 2017).

Nevertheless, a more detailed examination reveals greater loss of trust in the military among the Israeli public (Hermann et al., 2016) and to an even larger extent among the IDF's soldiers and officers. A 2016 survey conducted by the IDF's Center for Behavioral Sciences found that satisfaction among serving officers had dropped in one year by 4 percent and that their trust in the military had also dropped, from approximately 80 to 70 percent. Trust on the part of soldiers in their immediate commanders also dropped by 10 percent during that year. A follow-up by the same center in the second half of this decade revealed that a substantial number of soldiers have little confidence in their immediate officers and that lower-level officers do not have confidence in their senior officers. Only some 51 percent of conscripted soldiers and 41 percent of combat soldiers believe that their commanders will support them if they make a mistake while carrying out their duties. Only 73 percent of combat soldiers are satisfied with their service, in contrast to 76 percent in 2012 (Harel, 2017).

There has also been a decline in the prestige of the military profession (Heruti-Sover, 2017). This is reflected by a decline in the number of senior officers who transition into politics (Peri, 2007). In the past, two or three of the top cabinet positions (prime minister, deputy prime minister, defense minister, and/or foreign minister) were held by

former senior military officers; in 2016, there was only one. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of former senior officers in the police and other security forces who have joined the Knesset and the government; this points to the continued centrality of security—although not necessarily of the military—in Israel.

Economic Pressure on the Military

One field in which the military lost some of its almost omnipotent position is the economy. The IDF had always had an extraordinary ability to obtain government funding almost at will and the power to use this budget with minimal public, parliamentary, or government oversight. In the current era, civilian pressures have somewhat curtailed this unfettered capacity. The Finance Ministry has become a vocal adversary of the military, critiquing the size of its share of the pie of national resources. This is also the case with the State Comptroller's Office, which has been augmented by civilian organizations, some of which have carried their protests all the way up to the Supreme Court (Peretz, 2017a, 2017b).

Criticism in the economic sphere has led to the creation of several public and governmental committees, including the Brodet Commission (formed in 2007) and the Locker Commission (formed in 2015). In each case, the security establishment was able to thwart some of the efforts to shrink its budget, make itself more efficient, and cut back on its expenses, but in essence, the IDF finds itself in a defensive position (see also the chapter by Mandelkern and Shalev in this volume).

The Growing Motivational Crisis

The history of civil-military relations in Israel has witnessed several waves of decline in motivation to serve. One such wave occurred after the First Lebanon War, (1982), but changes in society and in attitudes toward the military have intensified and exacerbated the trend, so that today it is more structured and consistent than merely a "wave."

A survey in 2016 among high school students revealed that 12 percent of Jewish boys thought that military service is a "waste of time," 27 percent believed that there are better ways to contribute to the state than military service, and 12 percent believed that the military framework does not suit them (Dvir, 2016). In a survey conducted within the military in 2016 by the IDF's Center for Behavioral Sciences, only 40 percent of combat soldiers agreed with the statement that combat service contributes to the country more than any other type of military service; two years previously, that figure was 54 percent. There has also been a decline in the willingness of combat troops to serve in the career military. In 2012 some 41 percent were willing to do so, in contrast to only 25 percent in 2016 (Harel, 2017). Even among low-ranking officers already serving in the career military, some 50 percent said that they would not recommend career service to their friends.

Preference for types of military service reveal another significant change. The combat positions that were once highly regarded have been replaced by a desire to serve in innovative and sophisticated technological units, such as intelligence Unit 8200, cyber-warfare, air defense, and other intelligence units. These units provide the soldiers and officers serving in them with knowledge and a reputation that are highly relevant in contemporary Israeli society and can easily be transferred to the civilian market in Israel and abroad, where they can expect to earn very high salaries.

THE MILITARY'S EFFORTS TO REDUCE THE GAP

The IDF has regarded the growing gap between society and the military as a threat, so much so that Chief of Staff Eizenkot described it as more grave than the external threats (Tibon, 2016). The military elite has concluded that the IDF must renew its contract with civilian society. A significant portion of *The IDF Strategy*, formulated by the chief of staff in 2015, for the first time in the IDF's history focused on the structural tensions in the relationship between the political and military echelons and made an effort to define the authority, responsibilities, and obligations of both. Nevertheless, the document exhibited the same ambiguity that has characterized these issues.

The military has tried to mend the "reserve duty crisis," which had led to some 135 legislative initiatives between 2000 and 2016 (Rhein-Sapir, 2016), by adopting a new retribution discourse, legislative measures, and various amendments to existing policy. These included decreasing the size of the reserve network and reducing the length of mandatory reserve duty from thirty-seven days per year to a maximum of fifty-four days over three years. Material and symbolic compensations to those who did serve were increased, in an effort to ease the feeling that the burden was not being shared equitably. While all this did lead to some reduction of the tension surrounding the issue, it did not resolve the basic dilemma. It also created new problems, especially damage to the ethos of a "nation in arms" (Levy, 2011).

Material benefits were used to fight the decline in motivation, as well as increased indoctrination. The military, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, has broadened and deepened its involvement with high school students. Thus, for example, the Ministry of Education added the percentage of graduates who enlist in the military as a criterion for evaluation of the quality of high schools. Aided by the media, the army has also implemented various other programs in other social frameworks to bolster motivation.

In its efforts to reduce the gap with civilian society, the military faced contradictory demands from competing social and ideological groups. It began mobilizing Ultra-Orthodox religious students who had been exempt from service for decades. It also

dramatically improved gender equality, and the range of military professions open to women in the IDF was considerably expanded. This policy however, was severely criticized by the leaders of the National Religious movement, who opposed women serving alongside men. Ongoing negotiations and conflicting pressures led the chief of staff to release, in September 2016, the Joint Service Order, intended to preserve the cohesion of the military framework. But this has not brought about an end to the intense debate on this issue. The military and the rabbis, both Ultra-Orthodox and National Religious, have engaged in lengthy and convoluted fights, which continue today.

THE TRANSITION TO A NEW MODEL OF CONSCRIPTION

The IDF has attempted to deal with the wider gap between society and the military through the Gideon Multi-Year Program. Completed in 2015, the program is an expression of agreement between the military and the government regarding the size of the slice of the national budgetary pie that the military will receive over a period of five years. In response to the civilian criticism leveled at its fiscal management, the IDF agreed to decrease its staff by four thousand personnel. In an effort to cope with the problem of motivation, the IDF instituted changes in the officers' career system. In the past, most officers retired only at the end of their service, thus creating a heavy burden on the pension funds; the new model introduced additional exit points and determined that anyone who had not advanced to the rank of lieutenant colonel by the age of thirty-five would have to retire at that age.

At the core of most of these reforms is the basic dilemma regarding the model of conscription and military service, in light of changes in both society and the military. Should the IDF remain a citizens' army or transform, like most other militaries, into an all-volunteer force? Indeed, by mid-decade, only 50 percent of each graduating class and only three out of four Jewish men were conscripted. The IDF has also continued to exempt soldiers from serving their full period of conscription. One year after enlistment, some 40 percent of those who did enlist are no longer in the military. As for reserve duty, only 16 percent of a given graduating class actually serves in the reserves. By 2017 it was clear that "in essence, the IDF is not 'the people's army' but 'half the people's army'" (Tamari, 2016).

However, since the military acknowledges the deep attachment of most Israelis to the "nation in arms" concept—less than 40 percent of the public supports the volunteer army model, according to a survey by the IDI in 2017—the military has chosen a compromise. Concerns that an all-volunteer force will lead to an overrepresentation of lower-quality personnel and will have a negative effect on the nonmilitary roles of

the IDF as an integrative force that promotes solidarity and fosters a sense of cohesion in a divided society have brought the military to adopt a selective or hybrid model.

However, this issue will continue to be at the forefront of the dialogue between Israeli society and its military over the coming years.

CONCLUSION: FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR THE DEEPENING GAP

Ever since the IDF was founded in 1948, one cause of its success has been its sensitivity and responsiveness to expectations and demands originating in civilian society and its ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Civilian pressures, such as sensitivity to casualties, have brought about a change in its doctrines (Levy, 2012). In attempt to bolster its apolitical image, Chief of Staff Eizenkot cut back on the permits given to politically affiliated lecturers and civilian organizations and transferred authority for educational activities from the Military Rabbinate to the Manpower unit. The military supported the transfer of authority over the army radio to the Ministry of Defense. However, the supreme command did not have the courage—and the politicians did not have the will—to publicly admit that the occupation is a primary reason for the gap in civil-military relations.

A few courageous officers have said this after leaving the service, including, for example, the former chief of the Central Command, Gadi Shamni, who caused a public outcry when he stated, “We have brought our occupation to the level of an art form—but is this what we want to be?” Similarly, former heads of other security institutions have also spoken out, including six former heads of the General Security Service who were interviewed in the documentary *The Gatekeepers*. Nevertheless, these pronouncements have not had a major impact on society.⁵

The growing gap between societies and their armed forces tends to breed legitimacy crises. What makes the Israeli gap more potent is the fact that Israel is the only democracy today that is involved in prolonged occupation, an issue that deeply divides its society and puts extra pressure on the military. In the French case in the 1950s, such a burden led to several attempted coups and eventually the collapse of the Fourth Republic. As the occupation of the Palestinians continues, how will the gap in Israel develop?

According to one scenario, it will diminish once the military adopts more of the attitudes of the militant approach advocated by ethnonational and religious groups. Two decades of continuous growth in the number of religious officers have reinforced the assessment that this is an inevitable trend. On the other hand, it is possible that the established military tradition is so robust that it will influence religious officers and cause them to adopt it (Cohen, 2008).

Another scenario is that the gap will result in a deepening rift within the military, between technologically sophisticated units, based on the well-to-do, liberal-oriented

Ashkenazi classes, and the ground forces, which bear the burden of maintaining the occupation, and in which there is overrepresentation of the Mizrahi lower middle classes and religious nationalist groups. These two armies do not share similar political approaches. They represent different value systems, not least because of the growing number of soldiers and officers in the ground forces who are settlers living in the territories. The Azaria incident revealed the vertical gap between the senior command on the one hand and soldiers and lower-ranking officers on the other. It is possible that a horizontal gap between units will similarly be exposed in the future, with, for example, the air force and military intelligence on one side, and ground forces maintaining the pacification function on the other.

A third possibility is that the military's influence over society will grow. From its earliest days, the IDF took upon itself the role of a social agent, an elite that provides service to civil society in return for prestige, legitimacy, and power. As social pressure on the part of political and ideological forces to cut back on its stature intensifies, the military may respond with increased desire to fight for its position.

The civil-military gap could also explode. The Azaria incident provided some indications of this possibility, when voices from the right wing of the political map accused the heads of the military of being leftists, demanded that the government ignore their professional opinions, and even called for the resignation of the chief of staff and some senior officers. This challenge to the epistemic authority of the military as the "interpreter of reality" is very significant; without this authority, the military will lose its legitimacy in civil society and commanders will lose their authority over their soldiers. The debate became so acrimonious that some claimed that the policy of gender equality was a plot by the Left to put women into combat units so that they would undermine the military's strength.

For the first time, op-eds in the media by level-headed, prominent members of the writing class have expressed this sentiment. For instance, Uri Savir, a former director general of the Foreign Ministry and one of the initiators of the Oslo Accords, wrote: "There is no choice but to allow reserve generals to rescue democracy. Israel's democratic camp must undertake to allow people with a reputation in security affairs to spearhead a change of government. An emergency government is needed to move the state back toward the values of its Declaration of Independence" (Savir, 2016).

There is also, of course, a fourth option. On the assumption that there will be no demographic change in the composition of the officer class and that the political and military situation remains stable, the gap will continue as is, without deteriorating into a crisis. The conditions for this scenario are clear: the government is not willing to make fundamental decisions in the realm of security and prefers to grant the military freedom of action, and to lean on it in order to strengthen its own legitimacy. In this situation, the politicians do not wish to criticize the military too strongly. For its part, the military is not interested in making the debate any more acrimonious than it already is, so long as it enjoys relatively high levels of freedom and as long as it is still able to influence national decision-making.

The media continue to rally around the flag. Even if there is more criticism than in the past, it is marginal, and the media remain, as always, a mechanism of indoctrination

serving the hegemony and preserving the status quo. The public, which has been indoctrinated to believe that Israel is a “villa in the jungle” and that only the military stands between it and the threat of annihilation, will effectively continue to grant more privileges and freer rein to those in uniform than to any other social institution.

NOTES

1. The most comprehensive analysis of the changes in Israeli society that transformed the relationship among military, the polity, civilian society, and the economy has been presented by the senior Israeli military sociologist Yagil Levy in his numerous publications. See, e.g., Levy (2007, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015a, 2015b.).
2. See Yael Nagid-Mizrahi and Zvika Klein, “Quter of the IDF’s new journalist course are religious”, Makor Rishon, 30 April, 2013. <https://www.makorrishon.co.il/nrg/online/11/ART2/465/348.html>
3. A similar case, though not as severe, occurred at the outbreak of the first intifada in 1987 and led to a confrontation among then chief of staff Dan, Shomron, and several cabinet ministers, when the CoS argued that crushing the uprising would require the use of illegal means. Cabinet ministers accused Shomron of being “too soft” and defeatist and suggested that he should resign (Drori, 2016).
4. Moshe Ya’alon (former minister of defense), interview with author, June 25, 2017.
5. Among other things, Shamni said: “The IDF is busy controlling a population of 2.5 million civilians, which diverts the army from its primary function. The IDF is having trouble preparing for the threats facing it. The army’s ethics and capabilities are drained and it becomes a punching bag for politicians.” <https://news.walla.co.il/item/2993261>

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CHAPTER 34

CIVIL SOCIETY AND ISRAELI DEMOCRACY

Yael Yishai

In January 2017 hundreds of Israeli citizens blocked traffic and clashed with police outside the army headquarters in Tel Aviv, shouting, “We will turn the state upside down,” in protest against the manslaughter conviction of Elor Azaria, an Israeli soldier who had shot an already wounded Palestinian assailant in Hebron.¹ A few days later Adva Center, a nonprofit acting on behalf of the underprivileged, published its annual report, revealing poverty and committing itself to its eradication.² These two events expose the two faces of civil society: its bad face, which undermines democracy, and its good face, which fosters and nourishes it. The purpose of this chapter is to delineate the characteristics of contemporary civil society in Israel. Civil society is in a perpetual state of flux, and trends are hardly foreseeable, but structural properties forecast an approximate continuity. The vitality of civil society and its contribution to democracy may be evaluated on the basis of how well it fulfills three main functions: (1) mobilizing public participation; (2) enhancing tolerance, followed by the reduction of social gaps; and (3) challenging the government, steering it toward a democratic course. The main argument of this chapter is that civil society in Israel has largely failed to fulfill these functions.

Israel has been described as a “participatory democracy,” affording a fertile soil for the emergence of democratic civil society. But public participation is complemented by a high sense of inefficacy and is therefore largely ineffectual. Civil society, furthermore, has failed to narrow social rifts, as animosity among the social groups comprising society has been consistently on the rise. Finally, an active civil society challenging the state may be visible on the World Wide Web, but it has considerably weakened in terms of conspicuousness and agenda setting. Civil society exerts significant influence on government only when there is an ideological match between the two. It is not a buffer against abuse of power but rather an accelerator of undemocratic tendencies. To implement its goals, civil society often acts as uncivil society, portraying “bad” aspects rather than those leading to consolidation of democracy.

The role of civil society in democracy is particularly pertinent to Israel, a relatively young state plagued by abundant internal and external tensions, where vibrant political protests are staged under a heavy cloak of allegiance to national values and symbols. Israel was labeled in the past a “guided democracy,” emphasizing equality and unity among individuals who aspired to achieve common goals. Collective ideology, adhered to by an overwhelming majority of the (Jewish) population, ruled out the option of a confrontational civil society. Indeed, political life in Israel, including civil society, was guided by a power elite that used manipulative techniques to adjust political participation to its dispositions (Ben Eliezer, 1993). In the past three decades the country has undergone significant changes as the neoliberal mood has not only swept the economy but also reshaped political and social structures. The balance sheet between the positive and the negative contributions of contemporary civil society in Israel to democracy is the underlying question addressed by this chapter.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRACY

Within comparative politics, civil society has come to be seen as one of the key structural components of the polity. Although remaining somewhat vague, it has been defined as situated within the public space, outside the state and political society, distinct from private life, and connecting particularistic interests with the political realm of the state (Berhard et al., 2017; Diamond, 1994; Edwards, 2011). Civil society matters for democracy in the never-ending quest to intensify it beyond its formal structure. Even where democracy is firmly consolidated and its survival is not at risk, its quality may deteriorate, and the need for adaptation and reinvigoration may become increasingly manifest. Yet whether or not civil society is a panacea for the ailments of democracy has been a contested question. For the followers of Alexis de Tocqueville, a dense civil society is a prerequisite for modern liberal democracy. Other scholars (e.g., Putnam, 1993) assert that there is no empirical evidence for the democratizing power of a vital associational landscape, and that not all civil societies, vibrant and robust as they may be, sustain democratic politics. In fact, civil society may be bad, mutilating democracy. It remains an open question in which cases civil society facilitates democratic consolidation or inhibits it. To answer this question, the three major functions of civil society—mobilization, integration, and confrontation—are considered here.

As mentioned previously, the first major function of civil society is to mobilize political participation and to inculcate democratic values in citizens (Foley & Edwards, 1996). Civil society serves democracy best when it is dense in sheer number of associations. More is better, suggested Putnam (1993). Other scholars, however, have been less confident about the causative connection between the number of civil society organizations and democratization (Edwards, 2011), arguing that it is not merely the volume but the substance that matters (Berman, 1997). Substance is closely related to efficacy. The more efficacious those taking part in civil society activities, the

higher the likelihood of meaningful, rather than ceremonial, participation. The second contribution of civil society to democracy is cultivating the disposition to cooperate, which is an antidote to anomie, apathy, isolation, and intolerance. It has generally been accepted that the absence of reciprocity involving the recognition of other citizens, even those with whom there are deep disagreements, as moral agents deserving civility, is detrimental to democracy (Chambers & Kopstein, 2001).

Finally, a vital civil society is expected to challenge the government and encounter it. Challenges can be identified on the basis of three characteristics: normative, structural, and behavioral. Normatively, challenges propound fundamental changes in values, confronting the status quo. Structurally, wide public mobilization testifies to the presence of challenges. Behaviorally, street demonstrations and other observable activities make them visible in the public arena. Challenges may remain within the boundaries of normal democratic politics or can develop into an antisystem phenomenon, in which case civil society becomes uncivil, aggressive, and fanatical (Glasius, 2010). Challenges boost democracy by mobilizing dissent and stimulating debate. Enduring opposition to prevailing norms, leaders, and/or policies has been a vital function of civil society. In Israel, the fulfillment of these three functions has fallen short of consolidating its democracy.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION: VOLUME AND SIGNIFICANCE

The concept of volume has both structural and behavioral attributes. A mandatory registration of public associations allows tracking structural tendencies in civil society's volume. In Israel, the Associations Law regulates civil society by imposing the duty to register and by issuing directives for organizational conduct (Yishai, 1998a). In 1982, when the Law of Associations came into force, there were 1,774 registered associations; by 2015 their number had risen to 38,970, an impressive increase.³ During this period the growth rate of the population was only close to twice. Data thus reveal a significant growth in terms of sheer numbers of associations. There is no accurate way to differentiate, on the basis of the Associations' Registrar files, between the two types of civil society, the good and the bad. It is evident, however, that the shrinkage of the welfare state, starting in the 1980s, and the diminishing state budgetary allocations to public services have instigated the growth of welfare associations, also termed the Third Sector (Gidron et al., 2004). Voluntary activity may in fact denote the decline of the welfare state. As noted by Amna (2006), the good news about a vibrant civic life has become bad news for social democracy, which has fallen prey to what he terms an "insulting bourgeois philanthropy." Whether good or bad, civil society in Israel is indeed dense, fulfilling that prerequisite of democracy.

A bright picture emerges also with regard to political participation, a cardinal element of democracy. Notwithstanding media complaints about political apathy, the data

(compiled by the Israel Democracy Institute, supplemented by the Central Statistics Bureau) reveal a different picture. In 2015 over half the respondents in a national survey (54.6 percent) indicated that they very often or often “discuss with their friends political issues” (Herman 2016, p. 199). The Israelis were also portrayed as compulsive listeners to the news. Among those actively interested in politics, one-half also demonstrated at least one other type of political action. Some 29.5 percent reported that they had participated in a protest demonstration during the year preceding the survey (*Social Survey*, 2016). The comparable number for the European Union is only 20 percent.⁴ In Israel, two out of five respondents (42.4 percent) stated they were involved during the survey period in an activity aimed at promoting “social change” (*Social Survey*, 2016). In fact, a press report revealed that during one day in October 2016 the space in front of the Knesset was heavily occupied by demonstrators, including handicapped people demanding an increase in their allowance, homeless people reminding politicians that housing in Israel is unaffordable, residents of the Galilee (the northern part of Israel) calling for governmental attention to their plight, settlers from the West Bank prodding the Knesset to extend Israeli sovereignty over the occupied territories, and women pressuring the government to take measures toward conciliation with the Palestinians (Amit, 2016). Israel was ranked second (after Norway) in a world survey of 167 states, with a grade of 8.9 out of 10 points on the index of political participation (including, among others, voting rate, political interest and involvement, and inclination to demonstrate), a ranking that has been consistent over the years (Herman, 2016). These data clearly reveal that civil society has a great potential for mobilizing wide majorities. The high level of involvement in politics can be traced to the obtrusiveness of political decisions in everyday life. Attention to politics in Israel is simply a necessity (Wolsfeld, 1988).

Furthermore, Western democracies suffer from a severe decline in the trust of citizens in the institutions that govern them.⁵ Israel has not escaped this observable phenomenon, but data actually show an increase in the trust individuals have in political institutions. A comparison across a decade (2005–2015) clearly reveals this tendency. In 2005, distrust of the Knesset (to a large or some degree) was stated by 75.7 percent of the population, of the government by 57.1 percent, and of political parties by 81.9 percent. A decade later, there was a decline of 14.8 percent distrust in the Knesset, a small rise of 3.7 percent in distrust of the government, and a significant decline of distrust of political parties, 11.6 percent. The meaning of this shift is that convictions regarding the polity tend to be somewhat positive.

The fly in the ointment is that although Israelis are intensive and loyal participants, they have a low sense of efficacy. In Israeli democracy, political action “had the effect of maximizing the idea of participation while minimizing the importance of influence” (Ben Eliezer, 1993, p. 404). Only 29.6 percent of respondents in a national survey reported that the extent to which they, and their friends, “can influence government policy” is “very high” or “moderately high” (Herman, 2016, p. 188). “Trapped by their history and culture, Israelis do not believe in their ability to change their political system, yet they continue to participate” noted Ben Eliezer (1993, p. 408). The gap between involvement in politics and efficacy was attributed to the electoral system and to the

bargaining that takes place during the process of coalition formation (Wolsfeld, 1988). It is precisely the tendency to participate, in a fashion confirming institutional and ideological structures, that enabled sustaining the system and avoiding change.

Another form of civic participation is conspicuous in Israel, where over 75 percent of the population in 2016 was Internet users.⁶ Technological change, mainly social media (blogs, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) can alter the ways in which civil society organizes. What has been termed “virtual civil society” (Berhard et al., 2017) has become the basis of a renewed and widespread civic activism. However, virtual civil society has played a minor role in introducing political change and has not ultimately led to democratization. According to Beissinger (2017), in the absence of traditional models of association building, new technologies have actually had some negative effects on civil society. Their main problem is that they introduce high levels of volatility and uncertainty into the politics of democratic opposition, which paradoxically reinforce difficulties in developing coherent strategies, establishing clear ideological programs, and developing stable leadership, all of which are necessary to effectively promote democracy.

BRIDGING SOCIAL RIFTS

Civil society plays a potentially significant role in integrating society and bridging social rifts. In Israel social gaps are formed primarily, though not exclusively, by religious observance, ideological views, ethnic origin, and national affiliation (see the chapter by Ram in this volume). Cross-time examination of civil society’s contribution to mutual acceptance and tolerance has proven that expectations in this regard, fostered by those attributing to civil society the power to consolidate democracy, have failed to materialize.

A salient rift within the Jewish population of Israel concerns the place of religion in the public sphere (see the chapters by Cohen and by Ben-Porat in this volume). Violent protests, angry verbal exchanges, and glaring media attention all mark what seems to be a growing religious-secular divide. A growing sense of alienation, declining communal-ity, and increased segregation between the religious and secular sectors of society has pervaded the scene (Barak-Erez, 2007). Tensions bring with them intense emotions that feed back into religious-secular disparities, further widening the divide. The role of civil society in alleviating these tensions has been modest.

Civil society within the religious (particularly Haredi) community is active, including agencies providing financial assistance, goods, services, and economic aid in major life events. Learning societies and associations responsible for religious services are likely abundant. Haredim are wrapped up in a network of civic associations catering for many aspects of their lives. These associations, however, fulfill what Putnam (1995) has termed a “bonding” function rather than a bridging one. Instead of reducing the gap associated with the religious-secular divide, they consolidate the exclusion of the former and their own separation from the unorthodox majority. During recent years Haredim have held

massive, often violent, demonstrations against conscription into the military (2014–2016), for the sacrament of the Sabbath (2011), for the sacrament of graves (2010), and against an LGBT parade held in Jerusalem (2006), to name just a few issues. All these protests were attended by a huge Haredi crowd, mobilized by religious leaders exploiting the dense network of synagogues and religious learning institutions to spread their message. Haredi protest demonstrations revealed the extent to which this community is disciplined, cohesive, integrated, and unified around its cause. By tending to all social and often economic needs, they excluded themselves from mainstream society, turning into “outsiders by choice” (Grant, 1989). The highly developed organizational structure, coupled with a deep sense of solidarity and ideological commitment, generated a deep rift within Israeli society. Instead of bridging gaps and mending fissions, civil society here plays a divisive role.

Changes do take place on the public scene. There is a growing process of exit from religious rituals, shopping centers are open on the Sabbath, and bacon is part of the Israeli menu. Marriage and burial ceremonies are increasingly conducted outside the auspices of religious ruling. These shifts are so significant that scholars have noticed a clear secularization process, which, however, is not a product of social protest or political mobilization, but rather of individual choices, mostly consumerist, having little to do with civil society (Ben Porat, 2016). Antireligious movements are hardly noticeable on the Israeli scene. One glaring exception, attracting wide media attention in Israel and abroad, is Women of the Wall, which promotes women’s rights to pray at the Western Wall. Mobilization, as well as achievements, have been humble. Another prominent exception was the campaign for “equality in carrying the burden,” meaning conscription of Haredim, which took off with much ado. Yet protest was short lived, subsiding into Internet activity and recruiting one activist to the Knesset (Yoav Kish), while Haredim continued to evade conscription and to vehemently protest against any attempt to enforce the law. Civil society could not be considered a factor instigating a change of either ideological or pragmatic course, nor was it successful in inducing the state to impose prevailing laws. Attempts have been made by civic associations (mainly Tzav Pius, an order for conciliation) to bridge the secular-religious rift by developing a discourse of shared Jewish identity, but these attempts, currently focusing on educational activities, have failed to attract media or public attention. Active religious civil society has not been matched by the nonbelievers. Consequently, the religious-secular rift has not moderated.

The impending fate of the occupied territories and the option of making peace with the Arabs have been the second source of deep ideological division in Israeli society. Initially, civil society was active on both sides of the ideological fence: pro-peace and pro-land. Significant peace activities had begun in the late 1970s with Peace Now, which had the ability to organize mass demonstrations, in some of which nearly half a million people participated, indicating that peace had gained wide social support (Herman, 2009). Many other peace movements sprang up,⁷ some carrying more radical messages. None has left its imprint on either state or society. They were mostly confined to few participants, failing to attract wide public attention and action. Through the 2000s civic activity for peace has dramatically dwindled in terms of political mobilization.

The feebleness of the peace movement has been exacerbated by civic consolidation of opposition to peace. Since 1967 the settlers have thwarted any attempted conciliation moves, suggesting that the territories occupied in 1967 are part of Israel's ancestral land and should be annexed to the mainland. The settlers' attraction⁸ can be attributed to several reasons, among which is the association of the settlement movement with the early pioneers, their sophisticated strategies, the organizational infrastructure supported by a human reservoir (mostly students of religious learning institutions) available for mobilization, the tactics of penetrating decision-making institutions, and the unwavering commitment of followers to their cause (Yishai, 1987, 1997; see also the chapter by Pedahzur & Perliger in this volume). Added to that are the perpetual terrorist attacks, which have intensified fears and increased the sense of threat among Israelis. The settlers skillfully exploited these sentiments, widening the rift between the pro-peace and pro-land camps (Ben Eliezer, 2015). Fifty years after the Six-Day War, the ideological rift between Left and Right has intensified and become more stern and uncompromising, with each side trapped in its own worldview and wrapped in a compelling identity. Civil society has done little, if anything, to bridge the gap.

The third rift, between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, is older than the state but still looms large in Israeli politics and society (see the chapter by Smooha in this volume). It is crisscrossed by a mosaic of overlapping social and economic parities. In addition, there is a presumed and self-identified cultural gap between the two segments of the Jewish population. In the 1970s, civic associations such as the Black Panthers were active in promoting, and somewhat reducing, the economic plight of the Sephardim. In contemporary Israel the civil focus is not on material distress or class interests but rather on identity and consciousness raising. The ethnic-religious nexus has become far more important than the ethnic-economic one. Many among the Sephardim do not participate in public life on the basis of their class affiliation but rather on the basis of identity. This factor is displayed in the structural makeup of civil society. There are some forty-two registered associations claiming Sephardi entitlements, primarily, though not exclusively, in the cultural domain. Some sociological factors mitigate the Ashkenazi-Sephardim divide, first and foremost among them being marriage across ethnic Jewish groups (according to unofficial data, amounting to some quarter of the married population), coupled with increased mobility into the Israeli middle class. Notwithstanding these trends, Israelis have grown weary of individual tendencies and have attempted to turn the clock back, following a worldwide course of identity politics, which has become a major feature of civic life in Israel (Peled & Ophir, 2001).

Seventy years after the establishment of the state, the legendary "melting pot" dissolving all Israelis into homogenous citizenship has not been realized. Civil society has played a dual role with regard to the Jewish ethnic rift: it has provided the Sephardim with an opportunity to raise a voice and be heard on the political scene, but this voice has interjected tension into the ethnic diversity rather than mitigating it. Promotion of ethnic identity cut across the social ladder. Academicians, actors, writers, and other public figures joined civil society's campaign to increase ethnic consciousness and rectify deprivation (e.g., Iluz, 2017), making civil society an agent of separation rather than of integration.

According to public opinion polls (Herman, 2016, p. 193), the most serious tension in Israeli society is anchored in the national divide between Arabs and Jews (see the chapter by Galnoor in this volume). Israeli Arabs constitute some one-fifth of the total population. The rift that divides them from the Jewish population is multidimensional, including issues of social inequality, cultural uniqueness, political stance toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, collective identity, and the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state. Arabs in Israel are situated on the horns of a dilemma. As Israeli citizens, many are torn between their affinity with the Palestinians in the occupied territories and their rapport with Israel. Although an ethnic enclave allows the Arabs to maintain their communal lifestyle, the long-standing conflict with the Palestinians and the deep sense of deprivation, backed by statistics indicating a low share in national resources, have contributed to widening the gap. In recent years there has been a growing demand among the Arabs to be recognized not merely as a cultural minority, entitled to self-administration of its affairs, but also as a national minority. By raising the banner of “a state of all its citizens,” implying the surrender of Israel’s Jewish identity, civil society deepens the rift between Arabs and Jews, with the latter overwhelmingly rejecting this option.

Civil society has not contributed to reducing the rift. The number of civic associations in the Arab community has visibly increased (Jamal, 2008), but advocacy and public activity of Arab civil organizations has failed to change Israel’s fundamental policy toward them, and neither has it increased rapprochement with the Jews. Arab civil society organizations, whose activity has been detached from that of their Jewish counterparts, assist in the empowerment and the development of Arab society (Jamal, 2017). They provide services in various fields, such as education, health, and planning. They also advocate and lobby for the rights of the Arab citizens inside Israel and internationally. However, the broad advocacy of Arab civil society has accomplished little in terms of bridging the national gap. Internal constraints such as fragmentation and divisions have contributed their share to the low attainments. But no less important is the state’s steadfast objection to acknowledging the Arab minority as an equal partner and a legitimate minority (Jamal, 2008). Despite the increasing number of Arab civil society associations, their contribution to reducing the Jewish Arab rift has remained modest.

On the basis of this discussion it appears that civil society in Israel has not played a major role in consolidating democracy because social rifts have persisted or become worse. Civil society did echo social demands and offered an opportunity to raise a voice. The religious camp intensified its insistence on its rights, the settlers had an imposing influence on the public scene, the Sephardim made their plea for identity a benchmark of public policy, and the Arabs formed a dense network of mutual aid associations. These manifestations of civic activity, however, have not contributed to the reduction of prominent social gaps. In fact, it may be assumed, cautiously, that the opposite has been the case.

CHALLENGING CIVIL SOCIETY

As noted previously, challenges are manifested in opposition to core values, in wide public mobilization around a cause, and in public protest activity. None of these attributes is visible in contemporary Israel.

The political and economic decomposition that has taken place since the 1990s has increased the number of associations and invigorated protest demonstrations. Access to state institutions has also been on the rise, particularly with the introduction of the primary system. But contention has failed to be inculcated. Women's associations present a good example. Rather than representing women's interests and forging them into coherent policy demands, they have concentrated on service provision, offering day care and vocational training (Yishai, 1987).

With the preponderance of fundamental core values and the institutionalization of distinctive and clear-cut cleavages, challenges have not gained ground (Ben Eliezer, 1999). Women and minorities have been undergoing a process of "NGO-ization," environmentalists resorted to litigation as a major strategy, LGBT activists settled for the entitlements they attained, and social justice seekers made themselves widely visible in a street scene (2011) that subsided into Internet activity. The song that hit Israel's top list in 2016, "Our Life Is Strawberries," manifests with great clarity the hurdles facing democratic civil society in the country. After enumerating socioeconomic problems, the song concludes: "We have no right to complain. . . . We've been ungrateful. . . . Let's go back to the basics. Time to say thanks."⁹ The subtle meaning of these phrases is that antagonistic civil society is improper, that protest is not permissible. These sentiments provide an uncongenial environment for the evolution of free, self-reliant, and challenging civil society.

The modest visibility of challenges reveals acceptance of the basic creed (paradoxically, in the absence of a common identity), without a desire to press for genuine change. In established democracies, mobilized groups struggle for social and economic equality, political freedom, and the redefinition of cultural assumptions. This is not the case in Israel. Housing is unaffordable, public services in education and health have been deteriorating, legal measures have been taken against the government's opponents, and innovative ideas regarding the conduct of state and society have been spurned. But challenges are absent.¹⁰ The very denial of the right to resist and contest the political authorities casts a shadow on one of the fundamental functions of civil society in promoting democracy. Rallying around the flag has become a requisite during crisis, but it spills over into what may be considered normal routine. A challenge could have emerged from the legendary 2011 social demonstration. Israel was swept by unprecedented protest as multiple encampments occupied public spaces and mass rallies were held in the big cities. Under the slogan "Social Justice," claims were presented, particularly with regard to unaffordable housing. Although the cry for socioeconomic equality was wide

in scope and unprecedented in Israeli political history, it could not be categorized as a challenge.¹¹ Even though the protest appeared to be broadly inclusive, researchers concluded that it embodied mainly the interests of the urban middle class, adhering to mainstream politics (Rosenhek & Shalev, 2013). Even the major site of the protest, Rothschild Boulevard in the center of Tel Aviv, embodied the good life “of sushi and espresso bars” and lacked a symbolic national resonance (Wallach, 2012). The huge national flags raised by the protesters and the emphasis on ambiguous and abstruse slogans, including “social justice,” do not reflect the spirit of challenge.

A brief review of each of the major social sectors depicts the minor role of civil society in challenging the authorities. On the religious front, Haredim hold vociferous protests, throwing dirty diapers and garbage at police. But their activity is aimed more at attaining particularistic objectives rather than challenging the system (Ben Porat, 2016). Haredim are secure in their stance, protected by their Knesset representatives. The huge financial support and other benefits they receive from the state testify to their success. No defiance of fundamental principles or practices is evident. Mizrahim also fail to challenge the authorities. The most deprived group in the Jewish population, the immigrants from Ethiopia and their descendants, do protest occasionally, demanding equality (i.e., greater government investment). Their activity, however, can hardly be described in terms of challenge. They do attract media attention and are responded to with symbolic politics, namely inquiry committees and promises for a brighter future. As previously noted, by and large the ethnic issue has been raised by intellectuals, journalists, and politicians. No mass mobilization has taken place to claim justice for those experiencing deprivation and marginality. Civil society organizations struggling for equality and inclusion for the disenfranchised have been active mainly on the Web, not in urban spaces.

The Israeli Arabs are the weakest group in Israel. The national rift, deep and profound as it is, has not turned into challenge, with one illuminating exception. On October 2000 a series of protests in Arab villages took place that turned violent, escalating into rioting by Arabs throughout Israel, which led to counter-rioting by Israeli Jews and clashes with the police, ending in the deaths of thirteen Arab demonstrators. During the years that followed more protests were held, generally following events deemed unjust to and discriminatory against Arabs. A good example is the protest (February 2017) against demolition of homes in the village of Kalansawa. These protest demonstrations, however, were short-lived and sporadic. Arab civil society has handed over the task of challenging to its Knesset representatives, part and parcel of institutional politics.

The ideological rift had the highest potential for challenge, because at stake were core issues relating to Israel's future as a Jewish and/or democratic state. The rift had a fundamental impact on the population as a whole and on all walks of life, including distribution of resources and espousal of values. As noted previously, the peace movement has not posed a challenge. More radical groups on the margins of the peace movement, including Shovrim Shtika and Betzelem, are typical examples of confrontational activity. While attracting much (intermittent) domestic and international media attention, their pursuit was confined to a minuscule minority.

Challenge from the right wing of civil society was superfluous, as the settlers accomplished their goals almost from the inception of their organizations. Even when Gush Emunim (an icon for the settlement movement) and its proliferating associations had parities with the ruling government, as was the case in the mid-1970s, the government yielded to its pleas. Since the advent of the Likud to power, the Gush has received an excess of material support and legal protection. Without massive state ideological, financial, and political assistance, the movements promoting the idea of Greater Israel could not have survived, let alone have expanded to unprecedented measures. At the same time, however, without accommodating civil society, the government could not have enjoyed wide public support and legitimacy.

The story of Gush Emunim is not only of a successful and vibrant civil society that effectively swayed public opinion and public policy. It is also a story of uncivil society mutilating democracy. Uncivility is manifested in what has been termed “a culture of violence” (Macgillevray, 2016). Although most of the time protests carried out by pro-land activists were peaceful, opposition to conciliation with the Palestinians has manifested itself in the rise of extremism both within Israel and in the occupied territories. Vigilante actions by settlers began in 1979 and became increasingly more frequent as years passed by. Between 1979 and 1984 the Jewish Underground killed and wounded innocent Palestinians. The main purpose of this group was to destroy the Dome of the Rock, one of the holiest shrines of the Muslims. Assassinations of praying Muslims in Hebron (1994) and the murder of Yitzhak Rabin, the prime minister (1995), were also associated with zealots of the pro-land movement, typically unapologetic about violence while using radical rhetoric against Palestinians. Other atrocious acts were performed against Palestinians, including kidnapping, burning, and uprooting trees. These actions were allegedly performed by the Hilltop Youth, a small group of zealots self-identified as the arrowhead of the settlement movement, whose purpose was to frighten the Palestinians and prevent any progress toward the two-state solution.

The extensive use of violence was the peak of uncivility, but there were other symptoms as well. The ideology espoused by the pro-land movement was messianic, intolerant to opposition, hateful of others, and exclusionary. The settlers of the occupied territories have successfully paved their way to the halls of the Knesset and the government, simultaneously infiltrating the mainstay of public mood. The government, partly associated with the pro-land advocacy and partly blinded by its supremacy in the civil arena, acted as if they were allies collaborating to achieve the same purposes. The expansion of the uncivil society took place under the auspices of a supportive state, enacting a series of laws attempting to prioritize the religious nationalistic sentiment over the liberal ethos. The attempts to cancel the formation of a public broadcast service, to authorize building on private Palestinian land in the West Bank, to invest the educational system with religious-nationalistic overtones, and to limit the opportunities available to civil society associations identified with the liberal ethos provided fertile soil for the emergence of uncivil society.

During the past few years the state has increased its intolerance toward oppositional civil society associations. In Turkey, Russia, and China, outlawing associations acting

against what is termed “the public good” is rampant, resulting in the repression of civil society. Israel does not belong to this club. Yet the government has not welcomed encountering civil society. “They [liberal, left wing associations] are our enemies” noted the deputy minister for foreign affairs (Hotobeli, 2017). But civil society activists are not sentenced, imprisoned, or assassinated. They unabashedly mobilize wide crowds, rally, dispute the government, and raise a loud voice. What is under consideration, though, is the contribution of civil society to the consolidation of democracy. A clear question mark has been put on the fulfillment of this task.

CONCLUSION

Civil society in Israel presents a paradox. Israel is a “participatory democracy” with a politically energetic population that, however, adheres to a collective national-religious ethos upon which the state was founded, with an intrinsic antagonism to opposition. As has been elaborated, participation is indeed striking, but it has maintained many of its symbolic attributes, not supplemented by an efficacious mindset. Civil society has been concerned with the deep, and deepening, social rifts, but instead of contributing to their moderation it has fanned the fire of division and enhanced domestic suspicion and animosity. Temperance of rifts was not affected by civil society but by market forces. The liberalization of the Israeli economy, followed by the demise of the welfare state, made the labor market a site for integration, particularly for marginalized groups such as Haredim and Arabs. It also enabled, to some extent, untangling the association of ethnic origin from social class. Yet no action taken by civil society groups has nurtured a sense of common purpose. As noted by one commentator, politics turned into anthropology, with each tribe telling its own (hi)story and living in its own territory (Livni, 2017).

The most surprising and perhaps unique aspect of civil society in Israel is the absence of a tangible and concrete challenge to the political authorities. This is even more puzzling in the face of the historical development civil society has undergone with regard to state-society association. In the first phase the state, using strategies of active inclusion, served as a mobilizing agency. Civil society was dormant, leaning heavily on the political establishment. The elitist model of state-society relations was clearly visible. In the second phase the state became subversive toward some groups and accommodative to others. A partial corporatist model could be identified. In the third phase of its development Israel became more amenable to public associations claiming entitlements and presenting demands (Yishai, 1991, 1998b). Pluralism was just around the corner. Had this phase persisted in the 2000s, Israel could be labeled as pluralistic, with a civil society that successfully challenges the state being acknowledged and concomitantly rewarded. This has not been the case, as Israel has failed to follow this track. The absence of defiance is even more puzzling in the face of social fragmentation. Despite the ongoing process of legally overstepping basic human rights, there has not been any common claim for upholding them. Each and every sector views political reality through a

narrow prism of self-interest. No common front has matured to insist on redressing injustice.

Regimes, especially those emphasizing unity and common goals, can prosper only with the sustenance of a supportive political culture. Since its establishment the Israeli state has attempted to maintain a homogenous set of values, mainly through political socialization underscoring the ethno-religious character of the state (Pedahzur, 2001). This effort has been commonly endorsed by civil society. Even the legendary 2011 social protest did not present a real challenge but focused on the prices of cottage cheese and housing (which rose by more than 40 percent in that year). Challenges could be traced to one public scene, with regard to the future fate of Israeli democracy and its borders. But ironically, there was no need for confrontation over this, as the state blithely yielded to the claims made by what turned out to be uncivil society. Instead of consolidating democracy, uncivil society actually weakened it with the aid of the state, adding its share to the reduction in democracy.

The picture that emanates from contemporary civil society in Israel is not encouraging with regard to its role in promoting democracy. It appears that a participatory, involved citizenry is insufficient to instill democratic values and to defuse accumulated social tensions. A vulnerable civil society, acting in a state subject to real and imaginary threats and craving refuge in the grand design of the nation, is hardly a hotbed for the consolidation of democracy.

NOTES

1. Blumental, "Hundreds of Azarya supporters protested after the verdict: 'shame'". Ynet 21 February 2017. <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4925509,00.html> (Hebrew).
2. S. Svirski and Etti Konor-Atias. Adva Center. Social Report 2016, <http://adva.org/en/category/annual-publications/social-report/>.
3. Data provided by Department of Information Freedom, Ministry of Justice, November 16, 2016.
4. Flash Barometer No. 189a EU Communication and the Citizens 2007.
5. Trust in Institutions and the Political Process. Harvard IOP 2017. <http://iop.harvard.edu/trust-institutions-and-political-process>.
6. Internet Users by Country 2016, www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users-by-country/.
7. Among them are Women in Black, Women for Peace, Btzelem, and Shovrim Shtika.
8. *Settlers* is a term covering many civic activities, from Gush Emunim through a variety of associations.
9. shironet.mako.co.il/artist?type=lyrics&lang=1&prfid=17593&wrkid=42322.
10. At the time of writing, a few thousand people gather every Sabbath evening to protest political corruption. This protest, however, cannot be classified as falling within the confines of "challenge."
11. In the early 1970s the Black Panthers, consisting of residents of urban neighborhoods and the periphery who were mainly of Moroccan origin, called for social equality. Protest was far more limited in terms of mobilization. In 2003 Vicky Knafo, a resident of a remote Negev town, marched to Jerusalem followed by a relatively large crowd, to protest the plight of single mothers in particular and the underprivileged in general. *Wrapped in the Flag of Israel* is the title of the book that documents her activity (Lavie, 2014).

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CHAPTER 35

POLITICAL CULTURE AND ISRAELI POLITICS

GAL ARIELY

POLITICAL culture—commonly defined as “patterns of orientation toward political objects” (Almond & Verba, 1963, p. 13)—is frequently used to explain political phenomena beyond the institutional realm. Claiming to elucidate the diverse ways in which societies conduct their political affairs, the notion of political culture regularly serves as a conceptual umbrella for anything and everything political, despite its lack of conceptual and methodological clarity. While cultural explanations are commonly cited in analyses of Israeli politics, very few studies have explicitly focused on Israeli political culture.

The starting point for this chapter is the distinction between allegiant and assertive citizenship—the contemporary way of viewing political culture (Dalton & Welzel, 2014). Reflecting a more traditional approach to the role citizens play in politics, allegiant citizenship focuses on materialistic concerns, the acceptance of authority, and the trust placed in institutions. Allegiant citizens thus tend to be satisfied with how democracy works in their country and to participate in conventional forms of political participation, such as voting. Allegiant citizenship is perceived as being necessary for maintaining the support of the political system. In contrast, in line with recent shifts in the notion of citizenship, assertive citizenship is regarded as posing a challenge to political systems. Stressing postmaterial concerns and tending to be skeptical of authority and institutions, assertive citizens are less satisfied with how democracy works and are more likely to engage in unconventional forms of political participation. This distinction between allegiant and assertive citizenship enables the scholar to map the political culture across and within societies (Dalton & Welzel, 2014).

While this distinction ostensibly embodies two ideal types of citizenship, in practice these two citizenship types are not mutually exclusive, as citizens may combine allegiant and assertive citizenship. Although Israeli political culture reflects a blend of the two types of citizenship that is similar to that in other societies, it is also influenced by unique factors that are described later. Before reviewing how the two forms of citizenship

manifest themselves in Israel today, we must first determine whether it is indeed at all possible to identify a single Israeli political culture. The next section examines this issue on the basis of a historical overview.

IS THERE A SINGLE “ISRAELI POLITICAL CULTURE”? A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

All attempts to create a congruence between society and the state run a risk of “methodological nationalism,” as within-country, political-culture variance undermines the ability to provide a valid description of a country’s political culture. Any discussion of Israeli political culture must thus first address two key issues: the precise unit of analysis and the extent to which subnational and between-national differences prevent Israeli political culture from being viewed as a unified entity.

While Israel is not the only country with disputed borders, delineation of the unit of analysis is crucial in the Israeli case. Does “Israel” refer to the territory bounded by the state’s sovereign borders, or does it also include the territory that Israel *de facto* controls, the West Bank? Even if the analysis is limited to the former, does the unit relate exclusively to the Jewish population, or does it include the 20 percent Arab Palestinian citizens, thus masking the substantive differences between Jews and Arabs? Different answers to these questions lead to fundamentally divergent understandings of the Israeli case.

Traditionally, sociological analysis of Israel has related to the society within Israel’s sovereign borders (Kimmerling, 1989) and to the Jewish population (cf. Yaar, 2002). Comparative studies that include Israel among other countries have also customarily limited their analyses to the situation within Israel’s sovereign borders (cf. Merkel, 2012; Peled, 2013). However, when the country’s actual control system is examined—beyond the 1949 borders—some scholars have sought to challenge Israel’s very status as a democracy (Ghanem, Rouhana, & Yiftachel, 1998; Yiftachel, 2006; see also the chapter by Dowty in this volume). In a similar vein, the Israel studies literature does not provide any clear or coherent guidelines for selecting the unit of analysis. Thus, following the more traditional approach, this chapter seeks to reveal the political culture within Israel’s sovereign borders, while highlighting the relevance of distinctions in its political culture.

Historically, Israel’s political culture was determined by the Zionist project that led to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and dominated it in the subsequent decades. Based on the principle of restoring sovereign statehood to the Jewish people, this ethos created a society at direct odds with its immediate environment and stamped its imprint on early Israeli political culture (Horowitz & Lissak, 1989). The state being perceived as sacred, the principle of “statism,” that is, the state as constituting the central focus of loyalty and identification, has prevailed (Liebman & Don-Yihya, 1983). Forming a key component of the “civil religion” that has developed in Israel, this notion is exemplified in the “after 2000 years” motto that became popular among Israeli Jews after

independence and gave prominence to Jewish sovereignty. This was, however, more than simply a motto, as the state exercised tight control over society immediately after its establishment (Migdal, 2001). Such control was also expressed in state paternalism toward citizens and limited legitimization for bottom-up demands (Lehman-Wilzig, 1992; Wolfsfeld, 1988).

Strong emphasis was also placed on the collective, with individuals being subordinated to the will of the group and assessed primarily in terms of their contribution to the Zionist enterprise. The vision—and practice—of democracy was likewise rather limited, focusing principally on the representation of different groups as the prerequisite for political agreement (Aronoff, 1993). Political mobilization and participation were achieved primarily via political parties. In its early years the Israeli polity was thus described “as an example, *par excellence*, of the *Etat partitaire* or *Parteienstaat*” (Akzin, 1955, p. 509). Other aspects of democracy, such as limits on the power of the authorities or equality, were far less prominent (Shafir & Peled, 2002), with the democratic process being confined mainly to the Jewish population, in light of the fact that Arab citizens were subject to military rule until 1965 (Sa’di, 2014).

The primary socialization agents during this transformative period highlighted statism and collectivism. In addition to the educational system, socialization agents included the extensive youth movement networks belonging to the various political parties. Despite their disparities, these youth movements were all dedicated to promoting active engagement in the Zionist project. Up until and including the present, the most significant state socialization agent in Israel has been the military, with compulsory conscription for men and women (excluding Arabs and, until recently, ultra-Orthodox Jews) acting as an important agent of nation-building and political socialization (Levy, 2007). Generally speaking, the dominant model of citizenship during this period was strong allegiance to the state as the “carrier” of the Zionist project. The political culture was constructed from above to a far greater extent than it was constructed from below. While there are very few systematic studies of public viewpoints during this period, the available evidence suggests that this top-down practice was a function of the acceptance of the dominant political elites and preservation of the social order by the majority of the citizens. This era was thus characterized by a dominant political culture of allegiance to the state.

Despite the allegiance to the state, Israel’s political culture was—and still is—very far removed from hierarchy and formality. The Zionist ethos, together with socialization agents like the military, has shaped the informality of the political culture. On the basis of the personal relationships that tend to be established in a small country such as Israel and on their shared experience of the Israeli Defense Forces (which is in some aspects more a citizen’s militia than a professional military), many Israelis regard hierarchy and formality with skepticism (Sasley & Waller, 2017). It is no wonder, then, that Israeli levels of the “power distance” dimension are among the lowest in the world, according to the Hofstede cross-national values study (Hofstede, 2001). An illustration of the prevailing informality is the common use of politicians’ nicknames: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is called “Bibi” and President Reuven Rivlin “Rubi,” nicknames given to

them as children. The use of nicknames is not simply a custom; rather it is a reflection of the genuine influence of informality on the public policy process in Israel (Cohen, 2015).

From the 1960s onward, Israel's political culture underwent profound changes as the state developed. The overall mobilization required to ensure the success of the Zionist enterprise began to wane (Horowitz & Lissak, 1989), a liberal economic policy was adopted, and Israel's integration within the global economy from the 1980s onward further reduced the responsibilities and centrality of the state (Filc, 2012). Today Israel is defined as very high development country (the 2015 Human Development Index rate = 19/188). This evolution led to a shift away from the collectivist to a more individualistic approach, as reflected in an increase in noninstitutional forms of political action and a more independent civil society (Oser, 2010; Yishai, 2003) that reduced the centrality of the political parties (Arian, 1998). In this respect, the situation in Israel reflects the general decline among developed countries in institutional forms of political participation and party membership, with Israel's current rates of membership in political parties (6 percent) resembling those in Belgium and Denmark and the European average.¹ Thus, it may be said that the development of assertive citizenship in Israel has followed the path taken by other highly developed societies.

While up to the 1970s a clear social core existed within Israeli society that dominated its political culture despite the existence of some subcultures, over the past three decades Israeli society has become more visibly and politically pluralistic. Today scholars define it as consisting of various "tribes" and as being essentially multicultural in nature (Ben-Porat, Levy, Mizrahi, Naor, & Tzfadia, 2008; Ben-Rafael & Peres, 2005; Kimmerling, 2005). This identity is reflected in the issue of interpersonal general trust—or the lack thereof—an important component of social capital: Only 23 percent of the Israeli respondents in the World Values Survey (WVS) sample thought that "most people can be trusted," which put Israel lying midway in the cross-national distribution (46/94) of this measure.² With regard to other aspects of social trust, however—primarily within a closer circle—the Israeli score was relatively high (Yishai, 2003).

The constitutive distinction in Israeli political culture between Jews and Arabs is predicated upon Israel's self-definition as a Jewish state and on additional factors such as the Arab-Israeli conflict (Frisch, 2011; Jamal, 2011; Sa'di, 2002;). Israel is deeply divided along national lines (Haklai, 2011; Harel-Shalev, 2010), as is reflected in fundamental differences between Jewish and Arab attitudes toward the state. According to the Israeli Democracy Index published in 2015 (Hermann, Heller, Cohen, & Bublil, 2015), 88 percent of the Jewish respondents to a survey reported that they felt "part of the State of Israel and its problems" (very much/quite a lot), compared with only 32 percent of the Arab respondents. The Jewish/Arab disparity in relation to diverse measures of attachment to the state is also high in comparison to that in other divided societies (Elkins & Sides, 2007). Nevertheless, Palestinian citizens are not totally excluded from the Israeli political realm, and their political participation in civil society (Jamal, 2011; see the chapter by Jamal in this volume) and electoral politics (Shihadeh, 2015) clearly embodies a desire to achieve collective goals as part of the political process.

While the principal rift in Israeli political culture is the Jewish/Arab national divide (see the chapter by Galnoor in this volume), fundamental distinctions also exist within the Jewish and Arab groups. One of the major examples is the religious cleavage (see the chapters by Cohen and Ben-Porat in this volume). The religious and secular populations differ widely with regard to the form of regime they support (Ben-Rafael & Peres, 2005) and the political practices in which they engage (Stadler, Lomsky-Feder, & Ben-Ari, 2008). For example, a poll taken in 2015 revealed that 50 percent of respondents who defined themselves as ultra-Orthodox or religious reported that when faced with a “contradiction between democracy and Jewish religious law . . . in every case Jewish law should take precedence”—compared with only 12 percent of traditional or secular respondents. There was, however, no significant difference between these two groups in terms of their overall orientation toward the political process (political efficacy, interest, and knowledge) or electoral participation.³

Israeli subgroups also differ in their exposure to state socialization agents, primarily the military. Ultra-Orthodox Jews and Arabs are mostly exempt from military service. As long as the allegiant citizenship model emphasizes military service, these groups continue to be marginalized. Following changes in the relations between the military and society (Levy, 2007; Sheffer & Barak, 2010; see also the chapter by Peri in this volume), however, a political struggle is now underway over the military’s role as a socialization agent for the ultra-Orthodox community.

While the between-group differences can be traced back to the establishment of the state and before, Israel has recently witnessed profound changes deriving from marketization/globalization and “tribalization.” These reflect the “jihad vs. McWorld” dialectic and tension, or in Israeli terms liberal, cosmopolitan Tel Aviv versus sacred, nationalistic Jerusalem (Ram, 2008). In reaction to this process, significant changes are taking place within different social groups, and new forms of between-group divergences are also emerging. Some differences—particularly liberal/secular versus religious/nationalist—have become even sharper (Ben-Porat & Turner, 2008).

The argument that Israel has always had and continues to have a single political culture is thus simplistic. An in-depth analysis of this notion lies beyond the scope of this chapter, but the remainder of the chapter goes some way toward presenting an understanding of the issues by describing the overall patterns in Israeli society and its orientation toward politics from a comparative perspective, with special reference to the last two decades.

LOCATING ISRAEL ON THE WORLD POLITICAL CULTURES MAP

Israel’s self-image is that of a Western society (Smootha, 2005). This view is also reflected in the international domain, with some pundits aligning Israel with Huntington’s (1996)

“Western civilization” and portraying Israel as a Western stronghold in the Middle East in perpetual conflict with Islam—the Israeli–Arab struggle embodying the “clash of civilizations.” Israel’s Western positioning is also regarded as being a function of the prominence of Ashkenazi Jews of European origin within Israeli politics and society (Tal, 2013). Thus, many Israelis are of the opinion that Israel is a Western country.

Several factors give rise to questions regarding whether Israel should, in fact, be classed as a Western society (Smootha, 2005), alongside the debate about whether the “Western” category is in itself relevant. Since this debate does not employ the standard methods for studying political culture, its validity cannot be established in a rigorous fashion. Thus, to determine Israel’s location on the map of world cultures, it is necessary to adduce more solid evidence. Such a process will also shed light on the complexity of the Israeli political culture.

Based on the wide-scale data gathered by the WVS, Inglehart and Welzel (2005, p. 63) have drawn up global maps of political cultures (see Figure 35.1) based on two contrasting sets of social values: survival versus self-expression and traditional versus secular-rational. Survival focuses on economic and physical security and self-expression, on freedom and tolerance. Liberal postindustrial societies prioritize self-expression over survival and secular-rational values over tradition and religion.

Israel’s location on the cultural map shown in Figure 35.1 has placed it within the cultural zone of Catholic Europe, close to the center of the map and at the midpoint of the values scales. This placement is due to the conflicting forces shaping Israeli value orientations (Yaar, 2002). While as a highly developed postindustrialist democracy, Israel champions some self-expression values, the Israeli–Arab conflict and ongoing security concerns also make survival values important. The country’s place midway along the traditional/secular-rational values continuum in 2000 similarly reflected the religious division in Israeli society, together with the decline of religious authorities (Ben-Porat, 2013). These considerations account for the fact that Israel scored higher on the secular-rational values scale than countries such as Ireland, Portugal, and Poland. In addition, Israel’s location on the values map reflects the country’s overall average, so the divisions in Israeli society described in the previous section counter-balance each other.

With respect to values, in the 2000s Israel was positioned at a distance from the “Western zone” (Protestant, English-speaking Europe), demonstrating the gap between its self-image as a Western society and its actual (averaged) political culture. Values are, however, never static. The world cultures map in Figure 35.1 relates to the 2000s—the only period to date in which Israel has been included in the WVS. Trends of Israeli value orientation thus cannot be adduced from the WVS series. Nonetheless, on the basis of Inglehart and Welzel’s (2005) theory, changes in social and economic conditions may cause Israeli values to shift, moving the country closer to the Western zone. We should remember, however, that as a reaction to globalization, the process of tribalization is also gaining influence in Israel (Ram, 2008). Thus, developments in the “jihad vs. McWorld” dialectic will determine the country’s future location on the world cultural map.



FIGURE 35.1 World values map (World Values Survey wave 4).

Source: World Values Survey: The WVS-4 cultural map. (July 15, 2017). Retrieved from <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>. Used with permission.

BASIC ORIENTATIONS TOWARD POLITICS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Basic Israeli orientations toward politics and political-participation patterns represent a combination of allegiant and assertive modes of citizenship. The psychological involvement and interest of Israelis in politics is high (Wolfsfeld, 1988); 70 percent of Israeli respondents answered the question “How interested would you say you are in politics”

on the “very” or “somewhat” scale, putting Israel seventh out of ninety-nine countries according to the WVS.⁴ Israelis also tend to discuss politics within social frameworks, with 52 percent of Israeli respondents indicating that they discussed politics with friends and family. Thus, according to the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2004, Israel was situated in the upper third of countries in which the citizens were politically savvy—on a par with the United States.⁵ Similarly, Israelis tend to hold strong beliefs regarding their political competence. Again, according to the ISSP 2004, Israeli respondents’ agreement with the statement “I feel I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing (country)” placed Israel in the topmost percentile of the countries surveyed, lying between New Zealand and the Netherlands (see Figure 35.2). It was thus to be expected that the Israeli level of agreement with the statement “Politics are too complicated to understand” was one of the lowest compared to European countries.⁶

High levels of political interest and political awareness are also evinced across the Israeli political communication landscape. The major Israeli radio channels broadcast news every hour, and TV news receives high ratings. A comparison of the information environment among twelve countries found that Israel and Norway offered the most advantageous opportunity structures for informed citizenship about politics (Esser et al., 2012). This information environment is well reflected in Israeli news media consumption. A comparison of Israeli TV, newspaper, and radio news consumption habits with those of thirty-two other countries (“On an average weekday, how much of your time watching television/listening to the radio/reading newspapers is spent watching news or programs about politics and current affairs?”) indicated that the average interest in Israel (1.93) was higher than the European average (1.57). Israel, in fact, had the highest average level of news interest.⁷ This interest in politics is well entrenched in Israeli society, being reflected also in the higher levels of political knowledge of Israelis in comparison with those of their American counterparts (Arian, 1998). In the spheres of interest and knowledge, Israelis are thus assertive, even in a comparative perspective.

Israeli political interest and knowledge find preeminent expression in electoral participation, that is, the casting of ballots on voting day. Up until the 2000s, participation in the Knesset elections was high—around 80 percent—reflecting citizen identification with the state (Galnoor & Blander, 2013; see also the chapter by Shapira & Rahat in this volume). Since then, however, the level has dropped significantly, to around 65 percent, the lowest turnout (62 percent) being in the special elections for the premiership in 2001. This drop was regarded by Israeli scholars as cause for concern (Atmor & Friedberg, 2015), but the three most recent elections have demonstrated a steady increase in turnout—up to 72.3 percent in 2015 and 71.5 percent in 2020. Despite these recent changes, the overall average turnout is relatively high. The turnout levels also reflect perceptions of the electoral process. Israeli political integrity is perceived to lie in the upper 15 percent of countries that hold elections,⁸ with 72 percent of Israelis believing that Israeli elections are honest and fair—a level similar to that in Germany and Australia.⁹ The number of Israelis who agree that “It makes a big difference who is in power” and “Who people vote for can make a big difference to what happens”



FIGURE 35.2 Israel's political efficacy and political participation in comparison to other countries.

Source: Data for the figure are based on ISSP Research Group (2012).

is also on a par with numbers in the United States, with Israel lying eighth out of twenty-eight countries, according to the 2016 Comparative Study of Electoral Systems.¹⁰

The interest of Israelis in the electoral process does not extend to the same high level of interest and participation in other forms of political participation, as is illustrated in the index of political participation (aggregate levels of political participation) across countries presented in Figure 35.2. This index includes both traditional and institutional

behaviors (such as attending political meetings and contacting politicians) and nontraditional and noninstitutional behaviors (such as demonstrating or joining Internet political discussions). In this regard, Israel lies well below the country's top level of political participation despite the high levels of internal political efficacy.¹¹ Nonetheless, it is evident from Figure 35.2 that the gap between the sense of internal political efficacy and the actual participation is actually high in Israel. The overall levels of nonvoting forms of political participation in Israel are, however, not exceptionally low, with Israel rating twenty-seventh out of seventy-five countries on the WVS.¹² An in-depth comparative analysis of nonvoting political participation indicates that Israel lies close to the European average (Oser, 2016).

Traditionally, Israeli political participation has been described in terms of "interested watching" (Galnoor & Blander, 2013). In Israel, unlike in other countries, there is a wide gap between the levels of relatively high psychological involvement in politics and a low sense of political efficacy (Wolfsfeld, 1988). This may reflect the fact that the Israeli political system is overloaded with demands, making citizens feel that influencing the political process is difficult (Horowitz & Lissak, 1989). Nonetheless, when external political efficacy is measured across many countries, Israel's aggregated mean in relation to the statement "I don't think the government cares much what people like me think" is just above the average of thirty-eight countries.¹³ Despite the overloaded system, Israeli orientation toward politics exhibits some aspects of assertive citizenship, with the attitudes and actual behaviors of Israelis, in fact, indicating that Israel's citizens are engaged in politics.

SYSTEM SUPPORT AND DEMOCRATIC NORMS

Legitimate political orders are customarily regarded as enjoying a sufficient level of support from citizens. The study of political culture has thus frequently sought to identify the public values and norms that ensure the stability and functioning of democratic systems (Almond & Verba, 1963). In the face of claims about crises of legitimacy, scholars are closely examining system support, particularly support for democratic norms and principles (Dalton, 2004). Many are now becoming increasingly concerned that "disenchantment with politics manifests several major symptoms that can be summarized as citizens' loss of trust in and increasing criticism of the political system, its institutions, processes, and professional politicians" (Hermann, 2012, p. 12). When a significant proportion of citizens do not accept the democratic "rules of the game," democratic regimes are difficult to maintain.

Like their global counterparts, Israelis are generally overwhelmingly supportive of democracy (Arian, Nachmias, Navot, & Shani, 2003). A recent in-depth analysis of conceptions of democracy in Europe (Ferrin & Kriesi, 2016) suggests that the understanding of democracy in Israel resembles that in other European countries (Oser, 2016). Beyond abstract support for democracy and an understanding of the concept itself, the

question of how democratic norms remain valid when challenged is of vital significance in the case of Israel. The classification of Israel as democracy is subject to dispute (Ariely, *in press*). Yet, even if defined as democracy, many aspects of Israeli regime fall short of those exhibited by longer-established democracies (Merkel, 2012).

A number of factors appear to affect Israel's distinctive democratic norms: In particular, the Zionist ethos champions a strong state (Kimmerling, 2012). In addition, the integration of Jewish immigrants, the need to control the Palestinians in the occupied territories, and the ongoing Arab–Israeli conflict all intensify government power. And finally, Israelis tend to prefer strong leaders who deliver; surveys conducted in the 1970s and 1980s showed that the majority of Israelis think that “strong leaders can benefit the state more than all the debates and rules” (Arian, 1998). Support for strong leadership in Israel is high in comparison with that in many other countries and resembles the levels in India and Mexico (Arian et al., 2003). This attitude explains the popularity of leaders such as David Ben-Gurion, Menachem Begin, and Ariel Sharon—all of whom were perceived as being able to deliver and ensure security. Israelis also tend to value consensus and unity, and the legitimization of political disagreement and dissent is relatively limited (Yishai, 2003).

Nevertheless, Israeli levels of system support in other dimensions do not appear to be exceptional. Scholars distinguish between support for the political community and support for institutions and democratic norms (Dalton, 2004). While a systematic review of the various dimensions of system support lies beyond the scope of this chapter, some evidence points to the complexity of Israeli system support. In terms of support for the political community, the overall levels of national pride—a common proxy for support within the political community—place Israel around the global mean rate (65/105 countries), with only 50 percent of Israelis claiming to be “very proud” of their country.¹⁴ This placement is also in line with the European average with regard to other aspects of system support. The mean level of trust in the parliament (4.05 on a 0–10 scale, where 10 is the highest) is slightly below the European average (4.31), with Israel lying between the post-communist states and Western Europe (20/32). With respect to the levels of satisfaction with the “way democracy works in (country),” the Israeli average (5.26 on a 0–10 scale) is slightly above the European average (5.09), with Israel ranking 13/32.¹⁵ Israelis’ trust in political institutions is relatively low, reflecting the general trend of decline in political trust evinced across many countries (Dalton, 2004), which is in line with the development of assertive citizenship. The institution that garners the most support from Israeli citizens is the military, with an average of more than 80 percent expressing confidence in that institution (Hermann et al., 2015). This high level of support represents the prominent place of the military in Israel and in Israeli allegiant citizenship.

The protracted Israeli–Arab conflict, by its very nature, challenges democratic values and exerts a profound impact on Israeli political culture. Conflicts are known to increase in-group cohesion and solidarity in the face of an outside threat, privileging conformity over expressions of difference and discouraging deviations from established group norms. Thus, for example, between 1980 and 2011 political tolerance—a crucial aspect of democracy—was found to be strongly affected by terrorist attacks

(Peffley, Hutchison, & Shamir, 2015). People exposed to terrorist attacks are much less likely to promote democratic norms and the inclusion of minorities (Canetti-Nisim, Halperin, Sharvit, & Hobfoll, 2009). Unsurprisingly, as much as half the Israeli population thus believed that democratic rights should be curtailed “when the government thinks it is necessary” rather than that “under no circumstances should democratic rights be restricted by the government.” This proportion was double the average in thirty-seven countries, with Israel ranking 4/37.¹⁶ Israeli levels of disagreement (36 percent) with the statement “torturing a prisoner in (country’s) prison is never justified, even if it might provide information that could prevent a terrorist attack” were the highest in comparison to European countries.¹⁷ Further evidence for the current limited support for democratic norms lies in the relatively low level of advocacy of free speech, with 42 percent of Israelis not agreeing with the statement “Freedom of speech should be insured even for those who speak against the state.”¹⁸ Historically, during national security crises, Israelis have tended to favor security considerations over the rule of law (Arian, 1995). In addition, skepticism regarding the rule of law was to be found among elites, with “illegalism” being a profound component of Israel political culture (Shprinzak, 1993).

Yet another challenge to democratic norms is posed by the Jewish/Arab divide. Since democracy requires equality and inclusion, it works against practices designed to maintain Jewish dominance (Sa’di, 2002). Significant evidence points to relatively limited Jewish Israeli support for the inclusion of Arab citizens in the political sphere. Across a series of *Israeli Democracy Index* studies, various positions manifest a limited openness toward Arab citizens. For example, 57 percent of Jews oppose Arab parties forming part of the government, and most Jewish Israelis believe that a “Jewish majority” is necessary for crucial political decisions (Hermann et al., 2015). The *Index of Arab–Jewish Relations in Israel 2003–2009* (Smootha, 2010) has similarly indicated that 33 percent of Jewish Israelis disagree with the statement “Arab citizens should be allowed to vote for the Knesset.” The de-legitimization of Arab citizens’ political rights is a sentiment that can be found not only among some parts of the public but also among the core of the political establishment. After the 2020 elections, the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, explained that the Arab members of Knesset should not be considered for calculating the majority in the Knesset, since they are not part of the “people.” Nonetheless, there are some indications of Jewish Israeli support for the partial inclusion of Arab citizens in certain civil and political spheres (Smootha, 2010).

The religious cleavage poses a similar challenge. The religiosity–democratic nexus continues to be interpreted divergently, with some arguing that religiosity undermines democratic norms and others holding that it contributes to democratic practices. Various studies have provided evidence in support of both claims (Norris & Inglehart, 2011). While some have indicated that the Jewish religious population in general and the ultra-Orthodox in particular tend to be less in favor of democracy (Bagno-Moldavski, 2015; Ben-Rafael & Peres, 2005; Ben-Yehuda, 2010), others have pointed out that religiosity is not directly linked to the undervaluing of democratic norms (Canetti-Nisim, 2004).

Yet another type of study found that religious Jews and Muslims are less likely to support political violence (Zaidise, Canetti-Nisim, & Pedahzur, 2007). These conflicting findings reflect the complex relations between religion and democracy—also echoed in the ambivalence exhibited by religious people in evaluating democratic performance (Ben-Nun-Bloom, Zemach, & Arian, 2011). In light of the overlap between religion and nationalism and the blurring of religious/secular categories in Israel (Ben-Porat, 2013; see also the chapter by Ben-Porat in this volume), this issue requires further research.

CONCLUSION

Overall, Israeli political culture is shaped by countervailing forces that create a combination of assertive and allegiant conceptions of citizenship. Figure 35.3 illustrates these two citizenship modes from a comparative perspective. Respondents to the ISSP 2004 questionnaire were asked the customary question relating to citizenship norms: “There are different opinions as to what it takes to be a good citizen. As far as you are concerned personally on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is not at all important and 7 is very important, how important it is: ‘To be willing to serve in the military at a time of need’ and ‘To keep watch on the actions of government?’” (Dalton, 2008). Negative results reflect favoring a monitoring of government activity (assertive citizenship) over willingness to serve in the military (allegiant citizenship). The higher the gap between assertive and allegiant citizenship, the greater the shift toward more assertive citizenship norms. This explanation may be illustrated by examining the established Western liberal democracies in the lower part of Figure 35.3, for which the balance is tilted in favor of assertive citizenship.

Israel’s location in Figure 35.3 can be interpreted as suggesting that Israeli political culture is closer to that of post-communist countries, with democratic regimes but not necessarily a democratic political culture. In this reading, Israeli political culture diverges from the country’s self-perception as a Western society. It may also reflect the fact that Israel’s political culture is still largely shaped by imperative Zionist demands that require allegiance to the state, especially in light of the ongoing Arab–Israeli conflict. Both interpretations appear to be relevant for an understanding of Israel’s political culture. Methodologically, however, a critical reading of Figure 35.3 may call for the use of cross-national surveys to generate country means for defining a country’s political culture. The evidence presented in this chapter clearly suggests that arriving at an accurate picture of Israeli political culture is a very difficult task, especially given the profound within-country differences. The variance in orientations toward politics is influenced by the processes of marketization/globalization and tribalization, all of which intensify the differences between subcultures. Using political culture as an explanation for Israel’s political phenomena is an even more challenging endeavor. In-depth and comparative studies are thus required before political culture can constitute a valid explanation for political practices in Israel.

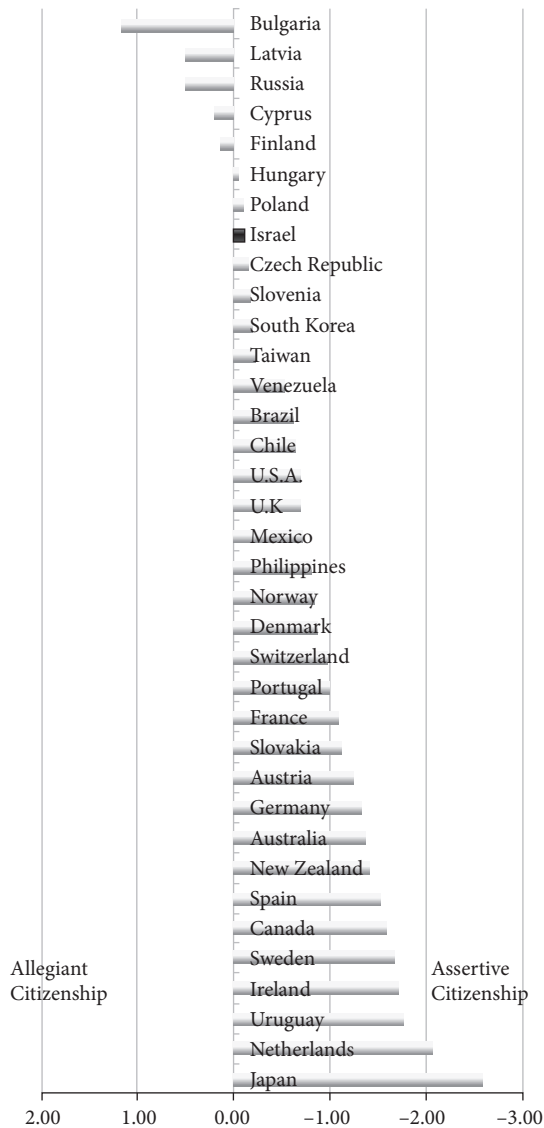


FIGURE 35.3 Assertive and allegiant citizenship norms across countries.
Source: Data for the figure are based on ISSP Research Group (2012).

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NOTES

1. European Social Survey (ESS) (2014). <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/download/wizard/>
2. WVS (Israel sample 2001) data from World Values Survey (WVS) 1981–2014 Longitudinal Aggregate v.20150418, 2015, World Values Survey Association.

3. Israel National Election Study (2015) (V21, V33, V34, V35, V49, V50).
4. WVS (e023).
5. ISSP 2004. International Social Survey Programme 2004: Citizenship (ISSP 2004), ZA 3950 (V47).
6. ESS (polcml).
7. ESS (tvpol; rdpol; nwspol). When the average relative consumption is calculated, Israel lies third.
8. The elections integrity index measures refer to the extent that international standards and global norms govern the appropriate conduct of elections. Israel's overall rate in this index is 22/158 based on the 2017 PEI index of electoral integrity (imputed) (Norris & Grömping, 2017).
9. ISSP 2004 (V55; V56).
10. CSES (2016).
11. Internal political efficacy refers to beliefs about one's own competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics (Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991), measured with the question: "I feel I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing (COUNTRY)." It differs from external political efficacy, which relates to beliefs about the responsiveness of authorities. Therefore, it provides an estimation of the political culture's sense of empowerment.
12. WVS (e025; e026, e027, e028, e029).
13. ISSP (2004) (V37).
14. WVS (2000, 2005); EVS (2008); ISSP (2003); and Global Barometer I (2009). Focusing exclusively on the Jewish sample does not significantly alter the results.
15. ESS (trstprl; stfdem).
16. ISSP (2004) (V63).
17. ESS (trrtort).
18. Israel National Election Study (2015) (V46).

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CHAPTER 36

ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR IN ISRAEL

ASSAF SHAPIRA AND GIDEON RAHAT

ISRAELI democracy might suffer from various weaknesses (see the chapter by Dowty in this volume); nevertheless, it is doing well in holding free and fair elections (Freedom House, 2019). This chapter reviews, analyzes, and explains general patterns of electoral behavior in national elections in Israel from 1949 to 2020.¹ It examines patterns of both voter turnout and choice of parties (as well as candidates in the few direct elections of the prime minister, in 1996, 1999, and 2001). It looks at historical trends but focuses mainly on more recent developments. The types of variables that explain variation and trends in these behavioral patterns are not unique to Israel, yet the specific relative weight of each factor tells much of the story of Israeli politics.

VOTER TURNOUT

Participation in elections expresses public confidence in the political system and provides legitimacy to the democratic regime as the “rule of the people.” Thus, high voter turnout testifies to the strength of a democracy. According to this perspective, low voter turnout may undermine the legitimacy of the democratic system and harm its functioning.

Voter Turnout in Israel: A Cross-National Comparison

The expectation is that voter turnout in Israel would be somewhere in the middle in comparison to other established democracies. Let us explain. On the one hand, Israel has a proportional electoral system that is expected to encourage turnout because citizens can vote sincerely for small parties without fear of “wasting” their votes

(Norris, 2004). In addition, at least until the three consecutive national elections held in April 2019, September 2019, and March 2020, Israeli citizens experienced fewer election events than citizens in other democracies and were thus not expected to suffer from “voter fatigue” (Franklin, 2004, p. 98). On the other hand, the population in Israel is relatively young and includes many immigrants. These two groups—the young and the immigrants—tend to demonstrate lower turnout rates. Moreover, unlike citizens of many other democracies, Israelis outside the country cannot vote (except for those who serve in its foreign service, numbering a few thousand), and there is no early voting.

Table 36.1 depicts voter turnout (decade averages) in twenty-six democracies during the period 1966–2015. A look at Israel reveals that turnout levels have been relatively low in comparison to other countries: Israel ranked fifteenth out of twenty democracies in 1966–1975 and fifteenth out of twenty-six in 2006–2015.

Table 36.1 Voter Turnout in 26 Democracies, 1966–2015 (Average for Decade)

Country	1966–1975 Averages	1976–1985 Averages	1986–1995 Averages	1996–2005 Averages	2006–2015 Averages
Australia	95.3	94.6	95.0	95.0	93.7
Austria	92.7	92.4	86.3	82.4	77.4
Belgium	90.7	94.6	92.4	91.1	89.9
Canada	74.6	73.4	72.5	63.0	63.4
Czech Rep.	N/A	N/A	N/A	69.4	61.1
Denmark	88.4	87.6	84.9	85.9	86.7
Finland	80.6	75.5	69.7	66.0	66.4
France	80.8	71.3	71.2	64.2	57.7
Germany	88.9	89.5	80.4	79.7	71.2
Greece	N/A	82.1	83.8	76.0	65.2
Hungary	N/A	N/A	N/A	63.8	64.6
Iceland	91.1	89.4	88.4	85.9	83.4
Ireland	76.8	74.8	70.1	64.3	68.5
Israel	79.9	78.8	78.6	75.3	67.1
Italy	93.0	90.9	87.5	82.2	79.8
Japan	71.4	71.0	68.1	61.9	60.4
Luxembourg	89.4	88.8	87.8	89.1	91.0
Netherlands	85.9	85.0	81.6	77.4	76.8
New Zealand	87.4	90.0	86.5	82.6	76.9
Norway	82.0	83.0	79.6	77.1	77.3
Poland	N/A	N/A	N/A	44.9	51.2
Portugal	N/A	82.1	69.0	62.7	57.8
Spain	N/A	75.0	72.5	74.2	72.5
Sweden	89.5	91.0	86.5	80.8	84.1
Switzerland	57.5	48.5	45.3	44.2	48.6
UK	75.0	74.4	76.6	64.1	66.0

Source: Data from Rahat & Kenig (2018).

The figures in the table show that most countries have experienced significant levels of decline in turnout over the years, and Israel is no exception; it had the eighth largest decline in turnout per annum in relative terms among these twenty-six countries. This is part of a general decline in the party-society linkage (Rahat & Kenig, 2018). In this context, Israel has witnessed increasing political alienation and apathy (Yishai, 2012); a decrease in public trust in politicians and political institutions, especially political parties, the least-trusted intuitions, and the Knesset (Israeli parliament) (Herman, et al., 2017); and a decrease in institutionalized political participation, such as party membership and electoral turnout (Kenig & Tuttnauer, 2017). While all of these trends are almost universal (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000; Rolfe, 2012), Rahat and Kenig (2018) found that Israeli parties experienced the third largest decline—measured as an average of a dozen indicators—among a group of twenty-six democracies.

Voter Turnout in Israel in Historical Perspective

Levels of voter turnout from Israel's first elections in 1949 through the elections of 2020 are illustrated in Figure 36.1. After a sharp decline from the first (1949) to the second (1951) elections—which may have been a result of the difficulty in mobilizing the hundreds of thousands of immigrants who arrived between 1949 and 1951—turnout level stabilized. In the next thirteen elections, from 1955 to 1999, it stood at between 77 percent and 83 percent. That is, Israel held on to its previous levels of voter turnout even when many other countries experienced significant levels of decline. This occurred although Israeli parties also experienced a sharp decline in their linkage with society (Rahat & Kenig, 2018). A possible explanation is that party decline was compensated for by the change in the party system, from the uncompetitive, dominant party system to the bipolar, highly competitive one (see the chapter by Hazan in this volume). Increased electoral competition has drawn citizens to vote.

Yet Israel did not escape the turnout crisis that most democracies experienced. In the special elections for the prime minister in 2001 (see the chapter by Rahat in this volume), turnout fell by more than 16 percent, to 62 percent. This sharp decline occurred for a number of specific reasons: the fact that the election was noncompetitive (the identity of the winner, Ariel Sharon, was known in advance); the unusually high frequency of elections (Israel witnessed four national elections in less than a decade), which probably led to “voter fatigue”; the particularly low participation rate (18 percent) of the Arab public (see later in the chapter); and the fact that these elections did not affect the composition of the Knesset, so most parties (except those putting forth a candidate for prime minister) did not invest much in elections, and some even demobilized their voters, as in the case of the Arab parties.

In hindsight, however, we know that these elections were not an “outlier,” but rather a watershed, after which turnout rates never returned to their previous levels. Although in 2003 turnout increased by more than 6 percent, in 2006 it dipped again, to 63.5 percent, the lowest ever in Knesset elections. Since then we have witnessed a gradual improvement in turnout, up to 72.3 percent in 2015 (and then another decline, to 68.5 percent, in

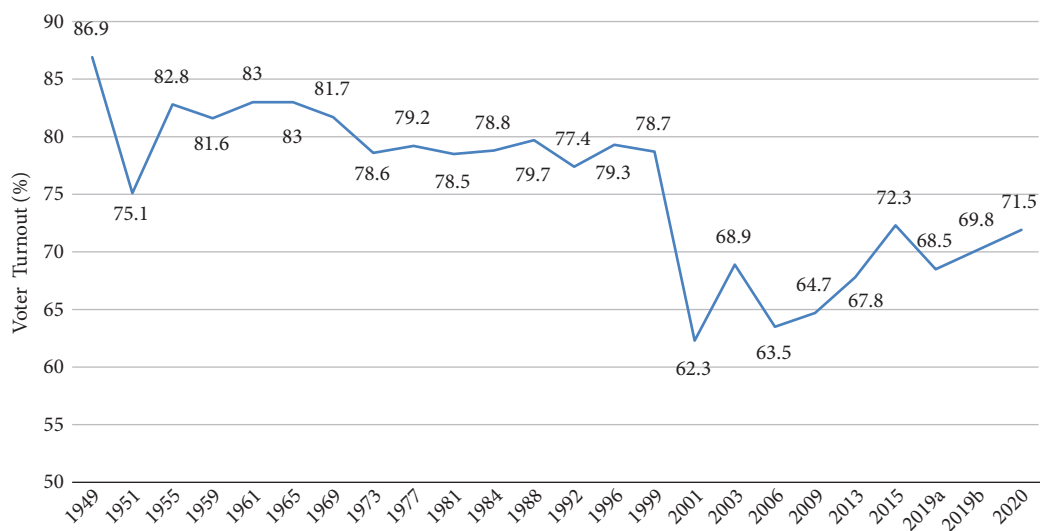


FIGURE 36.1 Voter turnout in national elections in Israel.

Source: Data from Central Elections Committee (2020a, 2020b).

the April 2019 elections, and a slight increase in the two subsequent elections). These trends can be explained partly by the level of competitiveness of elections; for example, while the 2006 elections were relatively noncompetitive, the 2015 elections were presented and seen as highly competitive, which may have contributed to the increase in turnout. Although the first 2019 elections were also quite competitive, there was a decline of almost 4 percent in these elections, which may be explained mainly (but not exclusively) by the drop in voter turnout among Arab citizens. Similarly, the explanation for the (minor) increase in voting rates in two subsequent elections of 2019 and 2020, which stands in contradiction to the well-known phenomenon of voter fatigue, is the impressive increase in participation rates among the Arab population, as well as the fact that they were perceived as highly competitive elections. In any case, voter turnout since the 2000s is still far from that seen in the previous century. It thus seems that while special circumstances led to a specific, sharp drop in 2001 and 2006, the general decline can be attributed to more general, long-term trends: the decline in the parties' ability to mobilize voters and the unstable state of the party system that has replaced the stable state of close bipolar competition.

Variation in Turnout among Israelis: Who Votes, and Who Does Not?

The research literature points to differences in electoral turnout among different social groups. This in turn influences their representation in parliaments; it is highly likely that social groups that have low turnout rates will be less represented in the parliament and

in government, both descriptively (in terms of the number of representatives from these groups) and substantively (in terms of representation of the interests and values of these groups).

Researchers have identified several sociodemographic factors that affect voter turnout at the individual level. Many studies show that citizens from higher socioeconomic strata, that is, those with higher income and education, are more likely to vote in elections. Those from lower strata, meanwhile, tend to feel alienated from the political system and are less likely to vote. Young people vote less than older ones do because they feel less integrated in society and lack a sense of political and social responsibility. Religious people vote more than do the secular, because they usually have specific interests and parties that represent their interests and a higher sense of social responsibility for—and solidarity with—their religious communities (for the same reasons, union members tend to vote at higher rates).² From a more general perspective, there seems to be a connection between a person's membership in a homogeneous community and higher rates of participation in elections (Geys, 2006).

Studies that have examined Israel have reached similar results. Avner (1975), who probed participation rates in the 1973 elections, found that as in other countries, in Israel higher levels of income and education as well as increased age were associated with higher voter turnout. He found also that Arabs voted at lower rates than Jews (see later in the chapter), as did those whose fathers were born in Africa or Asia and recently arrived immigrants (*olim hadashim*). A survey that focused on the 2001 elections presented similar findings: nonvoters were, on average, younger and less educated and had lower incomes. In addition, as in other democracies, it was found that religious citizens are more likely to participate in elections than nonreligious ones (Shamir & Arian, 2002). Another study, on the 2009 elections, found two similar findings: those with an academic degree and those aged thirty and above tended to vote more than others. However, contradicting the findings of other studies, no connection was found between religiosity and higher participation rates; on the contrary, it was argued that those who defined themselves as “not religious at all” tended to vote more than others (Philippov, 2015).

Other studies used ecological analysis to examine differences in turnout rates among various municipalities. A study of the 2013 elections found significant positive correlations between voter turnout rates in a municipality and levels of income, education, and religiosity among its residents.³ It also found that having a high percentage of residents who are recently arrived immigrants is associated with lower turnout. In addition, the authors found a significant negative correlation between the size of the municipality (in terms of population) and voter turnout: the more populous the municipality, the lower the participation rates of its residents. The authors' explanation is that small communities tend to be more homogenous, leading their residents to show a greater sense of solidarity and social responsibility. Preliminary examination of the 2019 elections also shows that in localities that belong to higher socioeconomic classes, as well as in Jewish ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) communities, voter turnout is higher than in other places (Atmor & Shapira, 2019).

Another interesting finding of these studies is that municipalities located in the central regions had much higher participation rates than those located on the periphery. The authors used the Peripherality Index, which classifies local authorities in Israel according to their geographical proximity to the Tel Aviv district, the country's economic and business capital.⁴ In the study on the 2013 elections, for example, it was found that in only one-third of the peripheral and highly peripheral municipalities, but in 80 percent of the central and highly central municipalities, voter turnout rates were higher than 65 percent; here, too, the preliminary examination of the 2019 elections shows similar results. The effect of geographic location on voter turnout remained significant even after controlling for other demographic variables. Moreover, the gap between voter turnout in peripheral/highly peripheral and central/highly central municipalities has expanded over the years—from 3 percent in 1999 to 8 percent in 2013. The explanation for this phenomenon is that geographic peripherality is associated with a lower sense of belonging to society and the political community and a higher degree of political alienation and apathy. This is so in part because the periphery usually receives less attention and fewer resources than the center.

We now focus on the turnout patterns of the Israeli Arab population, which currently comprises some 21 percent of the Israeli population (about 16 percent of the electorate). This is an especially interesting case, not only because of its being a minority population, or for its being more traditional than the more secular parts of Israeli society, but because of its complex stands concerning the Jewish and democratic state of Israel (see the chapter by Ghanem in this volume).

Voter Turnout among Israeli Arab Voters

Voter turnout since 1949 of the population that lives in Arab municipalities is illustrated in Figure 36.2. In the 1950s and 1960s, it resembled that of the population as a whole and sometimes was even higher. This changed in the 1970s, and since then turnout among Arabs has been consistently lower than the general voter turnout. The low point was the special election of 2001, when only 18 percent of Arabs showed up at the polls. Also in Knesset elections, voter turnout among Arabs consistently declined in the 2003, 2006, and 2009 elections. In the 2013 and 2015 elections there was an increase in voter turnout among the Arab public (as well as the general public), but it was still far below the pre-2001 rates. Participation rates sharply decreased in the 2019 elections, and the gap between voter turnout in the Arab public and the general public reached an all-time record (in Knesset elections) of more than 19 percent. Low voter turnout among the Arab minority both indicates and creates a significant challenge for the legitimacy of Israeli democracy.

The relatively high voter turnout among the Arab public during the first decades of the state can reasonably be attributed to the patron–client ties between the ruling party Mapai and the local Arab traditional leaders. These were very effective during the period in which the Arab population was under military rule (until 1966). In this context, Mapai formed Arab “satellite lists,” headed by local leaders who supported Mapai unconditionally.

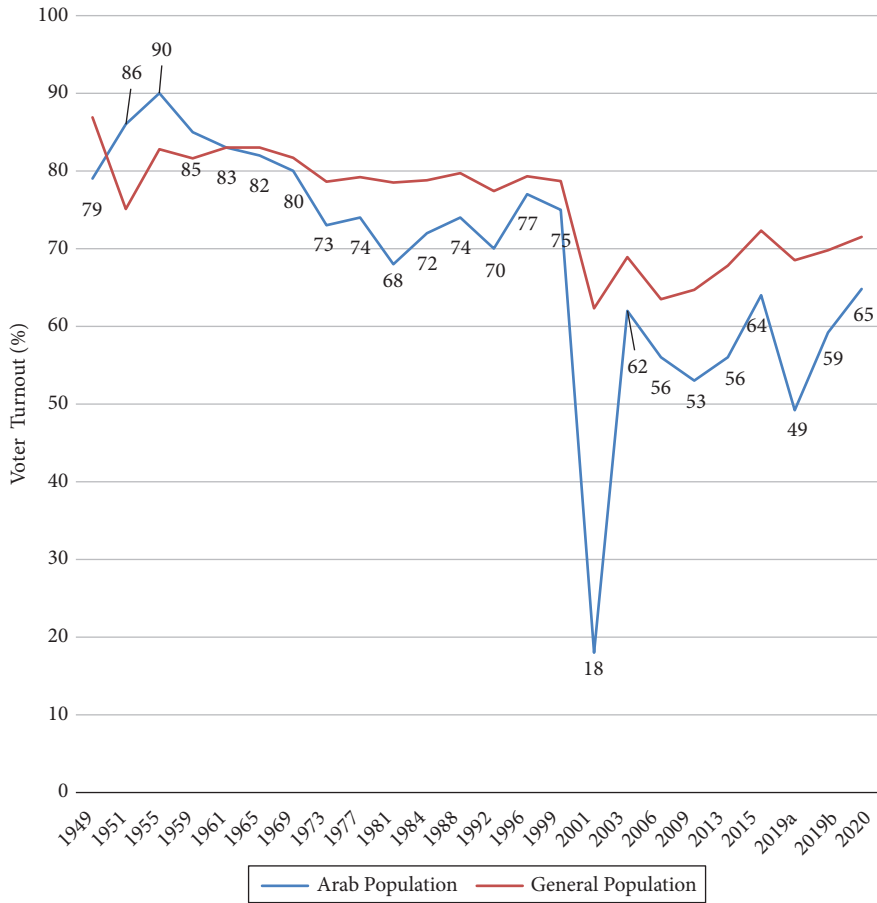


FIGURE 36.2 Voter turnout in Arab municipalities in national elections in Israel.

Source: Data from Central Elections Committee (2020a, 2020b); Atmor and Friedberg (2015a); Rudnitzky (2020).

The decline in voter turnout among Arabs was partly influenced by the same developments that led to a similar decline among all citizens, namely political apathy and alienation (Rouhana, Saleh, & Sultany, 2005). However, since the decline in the Arab sector was particularly sharp, and since it had already begun in the 1970s, long before the drop in voter turnout among the Jewish public started, this phenomenon requires a more detailed explanation. This is especially so because the decline contradicts the “modernization theory,” according to which modernization in terms of education and integration into the modern economy and job market is expected to boost voter turnout (Neuberger, 1998).

Factors that contributed to the high voter turnout among the Arabs in the 1950s and 1960s have weakened since the 1970s; the military government was abolished in 1966, and the involvement of traditional elements in national politics has decreased. Indeed, the satellite lists became weaker and finally disappeared in the 1980s. The hope that participation in elections would help to improve the status of the Arab public has also faded,

in light of the continuous marginalization of this minority and the sustained gaps between Arab and Jewish citizens (in land allocation and infrastructure development, to mention just two examples). The Arab parties that joined the scene starting in the 1980s (Nationalist, Arabist, and Islamist) were much more authentic in their representation, but they were never part of the governing coalition.

Evidence of the ideological abstention of the Arab public was already present in the 1973 elections (Avner, 1975), but was particularly pronounced in the 2001 elections (Jamal, 2002). The elections took place soon after the outbreak of the Second Palestinian Uprising (intifada) and the events of October 2000—a series of protests in Arab localities in northern Israel that turned violent and led to counter-rioting by Israeli Jews and clashes with the police, culminating in the deaths of thirteen Arab demonstrators. These events played a major role in exacerbating the tension between the Arab public and the state and substantially contributed to the decline in voter turnout of the Arab population even beyond the 2001 boycott (Rekhess, 2008).

Other scholars emphasize that the decline in voter turnout stems, to a large extent, from the disappointment of the Israeli Arab public with its political leadership. The claim is that while focusing on the Palestinian issue, it has lost touch with the public, neglected its interests and needs, and revealed itself as unable to achieve significant improvements in the situation of the Arab minority within Israel (Rekhess, 2008). Indeed, a study conducted on the 2013 elections found that one's assessment of the Arab parties' ability to improve the collective status of Israeli Arabs was the most important factor determining whether or not an individual intended to vote (Shihadeh, 2015).

In the 2015 elections, a joint list of all the major Arab parties was established for the first time. This contributed to an impressive increase in voter turnout of Arabs, by almost 8 percent in comparison to the 2013 elections. In a survey conducted among Arab citizens, 58 percent of those who said that they had not voted in the past but would or might vote in 2015 attributed their change of mind to the establishment of the Joint List (Radaï et al., 2015). It is possible that the perception that such a list would serve the collective interest of the Arab public—unlike the separate Arab parties, which each represent a particular ideology or sector within the Arab public—indeed persuaded many Arab citizens to participate in the 2015 elections. The same survey on the 2015 elections also found that the only sociodemographic factor contributing to positive voting intentions among Arabs was high income.

The sharp decline in participation rates in the April 2019 elections was probably the result of both the disappointment of the Arab public with the fact that the Joint List had been disbanded (the Arab parties competed in two separate electoral alliances) and their increased alienation from the Jewish-dominated political system following the passage of the Basic Law: Israel—the Nation-State of the Jewish People (see the chapter by Galnoor in this volume). By specifying the nature of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, this law made the non-Jewish population feel that they were not seen as equal citizens of the State of Israel.

The re-unification of the Joint List led to the impressive increase in turnout of the Arab population in the September 2019 and March 2020 elections. In addition, especially

during the electoral campaign before the elections of March 2020, the scenario that Blue–White would establish a minority government based on the external support of the Joint List was widely discussed. This likely also contributed to the additional increase in turnout of the Arab voters.

THOSE WHO PARTICIPATE: WHO ARE THEY VOTING FOR?

Increased Electoral Volatility

In this section we first discuss two general trends in voting behavior in Israel in recent decades: increased electoral volatility and decline in voting for the large aggregative parties. We then examine the central explanations for voting for specific parties.

From a cross-national comparative perspective, Israel is an extreme case; although most developed democracies have experienced increased electoral volatility in recent decades, a study of seventeen developed democracies found that Israel had the highest average volatility rates between 1996 and 2015 (Kenig & Tuttnauer, 2017).

Figure 36.3 presents volatility rates in elections in Israel over the years, using the Pedersen Index.⁵ Volatility rates were lowest from the late 1950s until the 1973 elections, which may indicate the solidification of the Israeli party system. In the 1977 and 1981 elections they increased considerably, especially because of the rise and fall of a new party, the Democratic Movement for Change (DMC). Volatility levels stabilized again, at a somewhat higher level. In the second half of the 1990s, with the adoption and swift

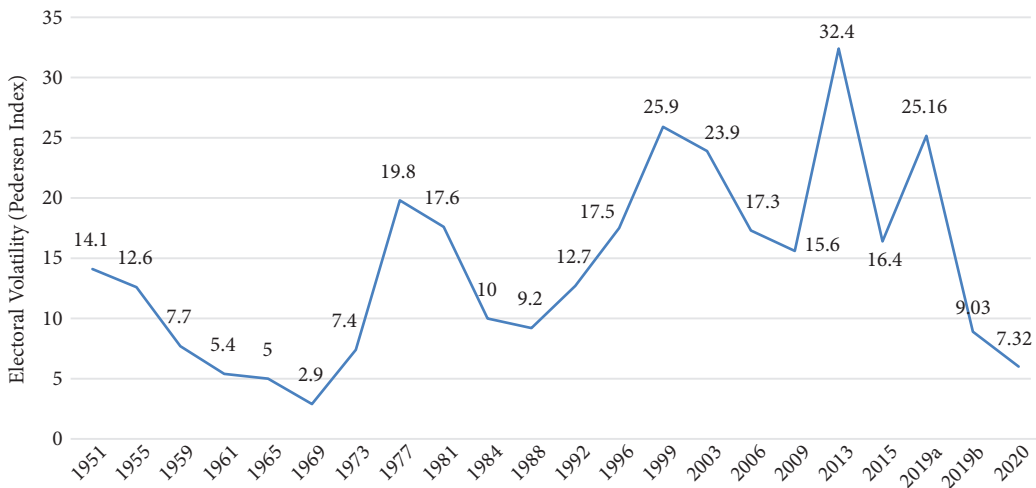


FIGURE 36.3 Net volatility in Knesset elections.

Source: Data from Kenig & Tuttnauer (2017, p. 38); Central Elections Committee (2019a, 2019b, 2020b).

abolition of the direct election of the prime minister, volatility peaked again (Kenig, Rahat, & Hazan, 2005). Since then, volatility levels have fluctuated, yet they are clearly high in comparison to the past. This indicates the decreasing ability of most parties to retain a solid base of loyal voters; interestingly, even the relatively low volatility rates in the exceptional “re-elections” of September 2019 and March 2020 (because of continuous political deadlock, both of these elections were held only a few months after the previous ones) were not so low compared to elections held from the late 1950s until the early 1970s. Yet it should be stressed that most of the changes in voting occur within the same camps. Most voters do not cross the lines between Left and Right or religious and anticlerical parties.

Voting for Large Parties vs. Small Parties

Increased volatility can be seen as linked to another central trend: a decline in voting for the large, aggregative parties. In fact, these are both signs of party decline (Kenig & Tuttnauer, 2017). Although the decline in voting for the large parties characterizes many developed democracies, in Israel it is especially striking. A study of eighteen developed democracies found that Israel is the only country where the average rate of the combined seats of the large aggregative parties in parliament between 2006 and 2015 was lower than 50 percent (Kenig & Tuttnauer, 2017, p. 28).

Figure 36.4 presents the combined number of Knesset seats won by the two largest electoral lists in each election from 1965 to 2020. As is evident, save for the 1977 elections (which were marked by the rise of the centrist DMC), until 1981 the two largest electoral alliances (Alignment and Gahal/Likud) gained seats. Since the peak of 1981, both large alliances have experienced a gradual decline in joint power. The first direct elections

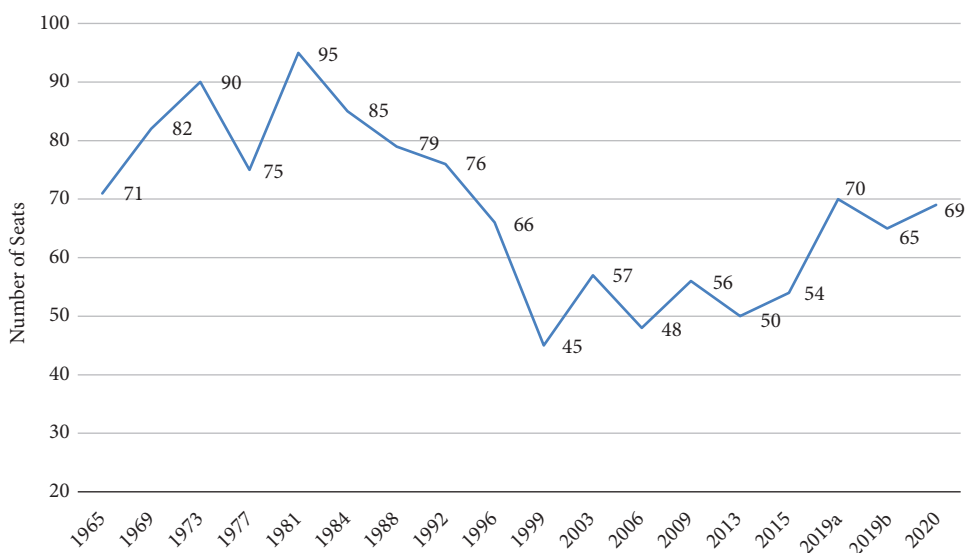


FIGURE 36.4 The combined number of seats for the two largest electoral lists in Israel.

Source: Authors' calculations on the basis of official results.

took place in 1996, and already the 1999 elections produced the lowest record ever of their joint power. The direct elections for prime minister in 1996 and 1999 compelled Israelis to split their vote—choosing a Labor or Likud candidate for the position of prime minister, while casting a vote for a smaller party that better represented their worldview or social sector for the Knesset (Kenig, Rahat, & Hazan, 2005).

The system of direct elections was abolished before the 2003 Knesset elections, but its ramifications for voters and parties did not disappear immediately. Thus, the two large lists have (re)gained some power since the abolition of direct elections, but only in 2019 did they again succeed in together garnering more than half of the Knesset seats. Labor and Likud have suffered, again and again, from competition from new or renewed centrist parties that have won support from “their” electorates. At the same time, more specific circumstances have weakened the two large, veteran parties, such as the decline in support for Labor among the Arab population (see discussion later in the chapter) and the weakening of its linkage with the Histadrut, Israel’s largest federation of trade unions (Mandelkern & Rahat, 2017). The Likud was weakened considerably after the establishment of Kadima in late 2005 (the former won only twelve seats in the 2006 elections), but has since recovered impressively.

It is still too early to tell whether the 2019–2020 elections reflect a return to a system based on two large lists, especially since the Blue–White party alliance split a short time after the 2020 elections. However, one trend can be clearly identified: The Labor Party lost its status as one of the two major parties, in favor of centrist parties/lists: Kadima in 2009, Yesh Atid in 2013, and Blue–White in 2019–2020.

Who Votes for Whom?

The proportional representation electoral system (see the chapter by Shugart in this volume) allows Israeli voters—who comprise a highly diverse society (see the chapter by Ram in this volume)—a relatively wide spectrum of choices to express their identities, stands, and interests. While there are aggregative parties in Israel that try to address wider publics, as we have seen, these have been in decline (at least until the 2019 elections). Many parties that represent specific sectors and collective identities, and are largely supported by these sectors, were there when the system was established (e.g., ultra-Orthodox, national religious). Others have emerged over the years—including parties that represent Arabs and Mizrahim (Jews hailing from Middle Eastern and North African communities), and since the 1990s, immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU).

Table 36.2 shows voting patterns in the April 2019 elections in selected communities that represent the various faces of Israeli society. The first two are Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, the two largest cities in Israel. These cities function as two distinct political worlds: the ultra-Orthodox and right-wing parties are dominant in Jerusalem, winning about three-quarters of the vote, while in Tel Aviv the center and left-wing parties won more than 65 percent of the vote in April 2019. Jerusalem continues to represent traditional, nationalistic Israel, while Tel Aviv represents its liberal, progressive face. The gap in the

Table 36.2 Election Results in Selected Communities, April 2019 (in Percentages)

Party List	Jerusalem	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	Bnei Brak	Nazareth	Karmiel	Degania Aleph	Ofra
<i>Likud</i>	24.8	19.3	5.4	1.5	32.5	4.1	15.6
Labor	3.0	8.5	0.2	0.9	3.3	29.4	0.1
Israel Our Home	1.6	1.4	0.4	0.2	16.3	0.0	0.0
Blue-White	11.8	45.7	1.2	4.1	26.5	52.9	1.3
<i>Hadash-Ta'al</i>	0.7	1.6	0.0	53.7	0.6	0.0	0.0
<i>Ra'am-Balad</i>	0.2	0.7	0.0	29.5	0.3	0.0	0.0
<i>Kulanu</i>	2.0	2.4	0.5	0.6	4.6	0.3	0.6
United Right	6.8	1.1	2.3	0.1	1.4	0.3	38.4
<i>Shas</i>	13.8	3.2	26.5	0.1	2.0	0.0	0.5
UTJ	23.3	0.9	61.8	0.1	2.8	0.00	0.1
<i>Meretz</i>	3.2	9.0	0.1	7.4	1.6	6.3	0.1
New Right	4.5	2.0	0.6	0.0	2.0	2.2	33.9
Others	4.3	4.4	1.0	1.8	6.1	4.5	9.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Volatility*	15.5	38.2	7.2	11.1	24.2	48.8	10.0

* Pedersen (1979) Index for the 2019 elections. We used the conservative approach, as described in note no. 5.

The highest support in each community appears in boldface type.

Source: Data from Rahat, Hazan, & Ben-Nun Bloom (2016); Central Elections Committee (2019b).

levels of volatility between these two cities shows the difference between the relatively stable religious vote and the relatively volatile secular vote.

The last five communities in Table 36.2 represent clearly distinct social subcultures in Israel, each with a typical voting pattern. In the ultra-Orthodox city of Bnei Brak, the two large ultra-Orthodox parties (UTJ and Shas) secured almost 90 percent of the vote. In Nazareth, the largest Arab city in Israel, the two large Arab lists won a share of more than 80 percent of the vote. The ultra-Orthodox and the Arab parties continue to act in two isolated and stable environments, both electorally and geographically, exhibiting rather low levels of volatility. In Karmiel, a city with a high number of immigrants from the FSU, support for Israel Our Home is prominent (although weaker than for the two largest lists). Labor still got relatively high support in Degania Aleph, Israel's first collective settlement—although even there it was replaced by Blue-White as the largest electoral list. In Ofra, a religious ideological settlement in the occupied territories, more than 70 percent voted for the national-religious lists, United Right and the New Right.

The Jewish Voters

Generally, the assertion that “religious, Sephardim [that is, Mizrahim, A.S. and G.R.], less educated, and lower status workers have voted for the right-wing Likud and religious

parties, whereas the Left...has had a disproportionate share of secular, upper-class Ashkenazim voters" (Shamir & Arian, 1999, p. 266) remains relevant to this day (Arian & Shamir, 2008),⁶ though it is now more accurate to talk about "center-left" rather than "left" political parties. But in order to understand these influences, we must first consider the main political cleavage within Jewish Israeli society.

Analyzing the 2015 elections, Shamir, Dvir-Gvirsman, and Ventura (2017, 139) argue that the election campaign "was conducted, like all of the elections in Israel since the 1977 realignment, within the realm of the collective identity cleavage." According to surveys, since the 1970s, Jewish voters have primarily identified not with a specific party but rather with the right-wing or left-wing political bloc; slightly more than 60 percent of Israeli Jews identified themselves within these categories in the early 1960s, and since the 1990s, this number has been around 90 percent. Moreover, the correlation between this identification and voting for a certain (right-wing or left-wing) party has also significantly increased. The Israeli left-wing and right-wing blocs advocate different ideological preferences, especially with regard to foreign affairs and security and religion-state relationships. Since the 1970s the strong correlation between political identification and these two issue dimensions has been clear: left-wing voters support both territorial compromises with the Palestinians and reducing the influence of the Jewish religion on public life in Israel, while right-wing voters support both the idea of "Greater Israel" (which would include the contested West Bank) and increasing the influence of Jewish religion on public life in Israel.

The result is that the Left (or Center-Left) and the Right are increasingly perceived not only as different political positions but as two distinct collective identities. The distinction between liberal, progressive Tel Aviv and traditional, nationalistic Jerusalem well represents these two separate collective identities. Because collective identities are usually anchored in social identities, it is not surprising that sociodemographic factors, such as level of religiosity and ethnic background, have such an influence on the Israeli Jews' support for right-wing or left-wing parties.

According to a survey of the 1969 elections, membership in the Histadrut was one of the two most important variables that predicted a vote for the Left, alongside a low level of religiosity (Arian, 1973). Since then, the Histadrut has lost its central status, many of its members, and its close ties to the Labor Party (Mandelkern & Rahat, 2017). At the same time, religion and its influence on voting have not dwindled; a range of studies over the years, in fact, have found a similar and even stronger correlation. Indeed, the most important sociodemographic factor that has influenced the support of Israeli Jews for specific parties or blocs in recent decades is the voter's level of religiosity: the ultra-Orthodox vote overwhelmingly for ultra-Orthodox parties, and the national religious vote mainly for the Likud or religious right-wing parties, especially the National Religious Party (NRP), known since 2009 as the Jewish Home (Hermann et al., 2014; Shamir & Gedalya-Lavy, 2015). But this correlation is also strong beyond the choice of the religious voters; more traditional Jews tend to vote to the right, while the secular tend to vote to the left (Arian & Shamir, 2008).

Another major factor that influences voting patterns among Jews is the ethnic background of the voters. Historically, Mizrahi Jews voted for the Right (especially Herut)

more than Ashkenazi Jews, while Ashkenazim tended to vote for the Left (mainly Mapai). And yet until the 1977 elections, Mapai was the dominant party even among Mizrahim. The influence of ethnic backgrounds surged in the 1977 elections and reached its peak in the elections of 1984 (Shamir & Arian, 1999). According to a study on the 1984 elections, at least two-thirds of the Jewish voters of center-left and left parties were Ashkenazim, while at least two-thirds of the voters of center-right and right parties were Mizrahim. The correlation between ethnic background and voting patterns remained significant even after controlling for age, level of education, and attitudes toward territorial compromise (Diskin, 1988). Later studies found that the impact of ethnic identity continued to be significant (Arian & Shamir, 2008; Shamir & Arian, 1999; Shamir & Gedalya-Lavy, 2015).

An interesting case is the voting of the immigrants who arrived from the FSU starting in 1989. Until recently, most studies have argued that there is a unique “Russian” political culture, which is more nationalistic (even imperialistic) and secular, and has oppositional tendencies (Fein, 1995; Konstantinov, 2008; Philippov & Knafelman, 2011). However, a study that examined the voting patterns of FSU immigrants and their children in the 2015 elections found considerable signs of Israelization. While the “first generation” of immigrants (those who moved to Israel after the age of five) are much more likely to vote for the secular Right, especially the Likud and Israel Our Home, among the second generation only small differences were found compared to the general Jewish population: they are somewhat less likely to vote for left-wing parties (but much more likely to do so than their parents and grandparents) and are much less likely to vote for the ultra-Orthodox parties (Konstantinov & Itzkovitch-Malka, 2017).

The correlation between socioeconomic status and voting patterns has been recognized in Israel for many years; as noted, among the Jewish population, highly educated and higher-income voters tend to vote more for left-wing and center parties (Cohen & Lazar, 2017; Diskin, 1988; Shalev & Levy, 2005; Shamir & Arian, 1999). For example, according to a survey-based study of the 2003 elections, 37 percent of Labor voters had an academic education, compared with 26 percent of Likud voters (Shalev & Levy, 2005). However, education and income have less influence on voting than level of religiosity and ethnic background. Moreover, since Ashkenazi and secular Jews tend to have higher levels of education and income than Mizrahi and religious Jews, there is a debate about whether education and income have an independent effect on voting patterns. Different studies have provided different answers to this question (Shalev & Levy, 2005; Shamir & Arian, 1999; Shamir & Gedalya-Lavy, 2015).

Studies on other developed democracies have identified differences between voting patterns of men and women, a phenomenon known as the “gender gap.” Here we refer to the “modern gender gap,” according to which women are more likely than men to support parties on the left. Researchers provide diverse explanations for this phenomenon, including the interests of women in the labor market, their need for welfare services, and the internalization of postmaterialist and feminist values (which are represented mainly by left-wing parties) (Inglehart & Norris, 2000).

According to election surveys, in all elections in Israel since 1996, women showed slightly more support for left-wing parties than men, although the differences were minor (Shamir & Gedalya-Lavy, 2015). In the 2009 elections, an interesting phenomenon was identified: women, considerably more than men, supported parties that placed prominent women on their lists of candidates—in particular, there was a statistically significant difference between the support of women and men for Kadima, which was headed by a woman (Tzipi Livni). This seemed to stem from women's desire for descriptive representation: the perception that representatives ought to be demographically similar to those whom they represent (Phillips, 1995).

In the 2013 elections, for the first time, significant signs of the existence of the modern gender gap were identified. According to surveys, men showed greater support for right-wing parties—9 percentage points more than women. This tendency remained significant even after controlling for other sociodemographic variables and policy positions. In this case, the researchers claim that the women's support of the Left is a product of both the perception of descriptive representation (in those elections, three left-wing or center parties—Meretz, Labor and Hatnu'a—were headed by women) and feminist and postmaterialist views (Shamir & Gedalya-Lavy, 2015).

The Arab-Palestinian Electorate

Historically, the Arab electorate was divided into supporters of the “radical camp,” consisting mainly of Communist parties (Maki and Rakah), and the “pro-establishment camp,” which included Arab satellite lists, formed and supported by Mapai (1949–1981), and leftist Zionist parties. In the 1955 elections, for example, the left-wing Zionist parties won about 21 percent of the votes in Arab localities, the satellite lists about 58 percent, and Maki only 16 percent. But the balance of power gradually changed. In the 1977 elections, Rakah won more than 50 percent of the Arab votes (Diskin, 1988). Those were also the last elections in which a representative of a satellite list was elected to the Knesset. In the 1980s Arab citizens primarily voted for either left-Zionist parties or Hadash (a list based on the Communist Party) and the newly established Arab (or Arab-Jewish) and non-Zionist parties (Arab Democratic Party, Progressive List for Peace and Equality).

A significant development occurred in 1996, when the share of Arab votes for Jewish parties dropped to about 29 percent (compared to 53 percent in 1992). A sharp drop in support for the Labor Party among the Arab public stemmed mainly from the impact of the direct election for the prime minister, which encouraged voters to support small parties in the Knesset elections, as well as criticism among the Arab population of Israel's military operation in Lebanon (Operation Grapes of Wrath) on the eve of those elections. It may have also stemmed from the emergence of new Arab political forces: Balad and Ra'am, which can be roughly described as holding nationalist and Islamist ideologies, respectively. Later on, even though direct elections were canceled, the share of votes for Arab parties continued to rise. The process accelerated with the establishment

of the Joint List in 2015, reaching a peak of almost 88 percent in the 2020 elections (Rudnitzky, 2020).

Between the elections of 1999 and 2013, the Arab vote was divided among three main parties—Hadash/Maki, Balad, and Ra’am (and Ta’al, which always joined one of them).⁷ Each usually won 20–30 percent of the Arab vote. Differences in voting patterns among the Arab population correlate with religion; Christians will naturally avoid supporting the party that is identified with the Muslim movement (Ra’am), while the Druze tend to vote for the Zionist parties. Differences were and remain apparent between regions, types of community (city, town, or village), and also sometimes in terms of income, age, and gender (Gedalya, Herzog, & Shamir, 2011; Rekheess, 2008; Shamir & Gedalya-Lavy, 2015; Shihadeh, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS

Israel has experienced similar, but seemingly more extreme, trends than most established democracies have undergone: a decline in turnout and in voting for large parties and an increase in electoral volatility. Its drop in turnout was relatively late, but the decline in voting for the large parties and the increase in volatility (with a few peaks) were continuous processes. In the last decade Israel has witnessed a gradual increase in turnout, stability in voting for the two large parties (below 50 percent until the April 2019 elections), and various levels of volatility, from moderate to high.

Even if the same factors influence the voting decisions of both Israelis and citizens in other democracies, differences in their relative weight can be discerned. Prominent in Israel are the differences in turnout and voting patterns of Jews and Arabs, and among Jews the most prominent influence is religiosity.

NOTES

1. Israel has a closed-list proportional representation electoral system, with only one nationwide electoral district of 120 seats. For more details, see the chapters by Shugart and Rahat in this volume.
2. A comprehensive discussion of these factors can be found in Blais (2000) and Franklin (2004).
3. See Atmor and Friedberg (2015b). Similar findings with regard to income and education level were presented by Afriat and Dahan (2010).
4. The ordinal index initially included five values, but in 2015 (after the elections) was extended to ten values; it went from (1), which indicated a very peripheral local authority, to (5) and later (10), which indicated a very central authority.
5. The index is based on the “conservative” approach to calculating volatility, which takes into account cases of party splits and mergers—a common phenomenon in Israel. According to this approach, in order to calculate electoral volatility in April 2019, we treated the United Right and the New Right (in April 2019) and the Jewish Home and

- Yahad (in 2015) as the same electoral list; similarly, we treated Yesh Atid (in 2015) and Blue-White (in 2019) as the same list.
6. This section focuses on the influence of sociodemographic characteristics, and to some extent ideological preferences, on party choice. However, other factors were also identified as influential in this respect. These include the influence on voting of exposure to terrorism (Getmansky & Zeitzoff, 2014). Scholars also examined the role that election campaigns, and the media in general, play in shaping voting preferences in Israel (see, e.g., Tsfati, 2017).
 7. In the 2015, September 2019 and 2020 elections, all four parties competed in a single electoral list; in April 2019, they competed on two lists: Hadash-Ta'al and Ra'am-Balad.

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CHAPTER 37

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND ISRAELI POLITICS

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THE evolution of the Israeli media in the seven decades since the state's establishment—from several ideological newspapers to a modern, commercial and vigorous media market—was shaped by political, historical, and economic forces, which dramatically affected the small and unstable media market.

STRUCTURE, CHARACTERISTICS, AND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS OF THE ISRAELI MEDIA

Generally, the Israeli media operate in a pluralistic and free environment, which allows them to serve as the government's watchdogs. Yet they face numerous constraints. In Freedom House's freedom of the press index, Israel is categorized sometimes as a free and sometimes as a partially free environment for the press, due to legal restrictions concerning security issues and economic pressures (Freedom House, 2017; see also the chapter by Dowty in this volume).

Dating back to the British Mandate (prior to the establishment of the state in 1948), the media market consisted of party-owned newspapers, which supported the ideological struggle for a Jewish state (Soffer, 2011) while operating under restrictive British regulations designed to prevent criticism of British authorities. With the establishment of the state in 1948, these restrictive regulations were incorporated into Israeli law. In 1953, in one of the most famous developments regarding freedom of the press, the minister of the interior ordered the closing of the communist newspaper

Kol-Ha'am after it criticized the government's policy. *Kol-Ha'am* appealed, and the Israeli Supreme Court nullified the minister's decision, affirming, for the first time, the right of the press to freedom of expression as an essential component of human rights, which should be restricted only in extreme cases (Negbi, 2011). This important ruling is the closest Israel has come to a declaration of freedom of speech so far, as no legislation affirming it has ever been passed.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEWS MEDIA

Scholars who have analyzed the historical development of Israeli media agree that there has been a three-stage development (e.g., Caspi, 2012; Peri, 2012; Soffer, 2011), a process similar to what occurred in other Western countries (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999). The first stage, which began before the establishment of the state, was characterized by party-owned newspapers and advocacy journalism. The second stage, starting about 1970, was characterized by the collapse of political parallelism and the emergence of professional and oppositional journalists. The media developed into a system controlled by privately owned and commercially oriented newspapers on the one hand and public radio and television broadcasting (IBA), supervised by political authorities, on the other hand.

In the third stage, starting in the 1990s, an "open skies" policy (Zukerman, 2004) led to the establishment of commercial, cable, and satellite television stations and sixteen regional radio stations, followed by some dramatic changes in the print media and the creation of online news media. The new electronic media were controlled by private franchises and operated under a commercial logic, yet supervised and regulated by state authorities (Caspi, 2012). Enjoying much less state regulation were online news outlets, mostly commercially owned, which began operating in the late 1990s, first as online editions of newspapers.

The fierce political competition within Israel has recently brought about a re-emergence of an ideological orientation in the media. The clearest example is the daily *Israel Hayom*. This tabloid was established in 2007 by Sheldon G. Adelson, an American Jewish billionaire who is known for his right-wing opinions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and his support for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Following its owner, this tabloid espouses a right-wing and pro-Netanyahu political point of view (Rada, 2008; Amit, 2017) and allegedly even allows direct intervention by Netanyahu regarding its content (B. Z., 2017). Emphasizing the argument that this tabloid has an ideological mission is the fact that it is distributed for free and apparently suffers great financial losses. Since 2011 it has been the most popular daily in Israel.

CROSS-OWNERSHIP AND CRONY CAPITALISM

In an important project, every few years *The 7th Eye Magazine* publishes a map of Israeli media ownership (The map of media ownership in Israel, 2016). This map shows that the

Israeli media market is characterized by massive cross-ownership, controlled by only a few stakeholders and tycoons. Most are also involved in many other businesses and commercial corporations (Davidson, 2012). As in other countries, this raises concerns about a narrow and homogeneous opinion market, cooperation between strong players to block competitors, and crony capitalism (Ezrahi, Goshen, & Leshem, 2003; Van Aelst, Strömbäck, et al., 2017).

Crony capitalism describes an economy in which corrupt collaborations between economic and governmental elites influence decision-making in the economic field, to the benefit of some businesspeople. These relationships contradict democratic values such as equality, decency, and especially public sovereignty (Fridman et al., 2012). When crony capitalism involves the media, it is usually used to achieve political influence for economic ends or to shape public opinion in return for economic favor.

In Israel, crony capitalism is in a stage of severe acceleration and stems from past governments' policies, the small market size, heavy centralization, and the massive shift to privatization (Fridman et al., 2012; see also the chapter by Shalev & Mandelkern in this volume). In recent years several accounts have been published in the media disclosing ties between certain media tycoons and Prime Minister Netanyahu, who was supposedly hoping for favorable coverage or the prevention of unfavorable coverage in return for certain economic benefits. One of the most well-known examples is the previously mentioned free daily *Israel Hayom*. In a case that was being investigated by the police authorities at the beginning of 2018, a very popular news website, owned by an ally of Netanyahu, has supposedly become a public relations platform for the Netanyahu family, censoring critical articles and promoting favorable items. This is in return for facilitation of regulations favorable to other communication companies owned by the same tycoon (Weitz, 2018). Finally, at the beginning of 2018 Israeli police recommended putting Prime Minister Netanyahu on trial for bribery regarding his involvement with the owner of the daily *Yediot Aharonot*, who agreed to change the newspaper's anti-Netanyahu line in return for economic favors. These benefits would include a reduction in *Israel Hayom*'s (*Yediot Aharonot*'s biggest competitor) circulation or in its governmental advertising share, which potentially reduce *Israel Hayom*'s revenue and popularity (Breiner, Hovel, & Landau, 2018). As Prime Minister Netanyahu was not the first Israeli leader to use such tactics to manipulate the media for his own ends (Tausig, 2017), the extent of supposedly illegal political interventions related to taking control of the media is extraordinary.

THE REFORM IN THE ISRAELI PUBLIC BROADCASTING CORPORATION

The Israeli Broadcasting Authority (IBA), established during the 1960s, was intended to ensure high-quality content in news, entertainment, and educational programs, and until the "open skies" policy was applied in the 1990s, it enjoyed great popularity. Over the years several public committees (such as the Committee for the Examination of an

Outline for Future Public Broadcasting in Israel in 2014) found that the IBA was in a severe crisis, stemming from a high number of employees, high labor costs, and rigid collective agreements. The IBA suffered for decades from harsh and transparent political intervention and political pressure by means of resource allocation, intervention in contents, and nomination of influential positions such as the CEO. These strong pressures caused IBA to decline from being the strongest news broadcasting institution to being a weak, outdated, and marginal player on the media map (Caspi, 2012).

These developments have led to a reform in public broadcasting. In 2014 the Knesset passed the Public Broadcasting Bill, which included closing the IBA and establishing a public broadcast corporation that would not be connected to political influence because its CEO would be appointed by an independent public committee, appointed by a retired judge. This public committee would also approve the corporation's budget, main policies, ethics code, and listings.

Prime Minister Netanyahu, who had called for the privatization of the IBA during his first term as prime minister (Peri, 2004), initially supported the reform and even represented it as a major achievement in his 2015 election campaign (e.g., Benziman, 2017). However, by the summer of 2016 Netanyahu was arguing that his support for the reform was a mistake, a byproduct of his having been preoccupied with the 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict while the reform was being legislated (Karni, 2016). From being a supporter, Netanyahu became a major opponent of the establishment of the Public Broadcasting Corporation, arguing that the corporation would become a "left-wing corporation" (Baruch, 2017). Minister of Culture Miri Regev, a major ally of Netanyahu, was quoted as saying, "What use is the corporation, if we cannot control it?" (for this and other quotes from Netanyahu and his supporters, see Benziman, 2017). Netanyahu initiated a major political crisis, calling for the closing of the corporation and the rehabilitation of the IBA. He eventually agreed on a compromise that included the separation of a news corporation from the broadcast corporation, a step that commentators argued was meant to separate the corporation's CEO and chairperson, whom Netanyahu perceived as political opponents, from the corporation's news department. The corporation appealed against this compromise to the High Court of Justice; at the time of writing the appeal is being examined.

PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU'S STRUGGLES AGAINST THE NEWS MEDIA

As a populist leader (Weiss & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2016), Netanyahu's communications often target various Israeli elites, including the media. For example, four days before the 2015 election, Netanyahu posted a statement on his Facebook account that his rule was in danger because media elements had come together with the Left to remove him from power. Throughout his long term as prime minister, Netanyahu has repeatedly made similar accusations that the Israeli news media are biased and unfairly influence the Israeli political process. According to a report by Yifat Media Research, issues related to the news

media enjoy widespread coverage on the Israeli news media agenda (Toker, 2015), partly because Netanyahu keeps attacking the media or issuing controversial media policies.

Research has revealed the electoral benefits of Netanyahu's attacks on the media. Tsfat (2017) found that voters who shifted their support from other parties to Netanyahu's Likud Party during the final weeks of the campaign were more likely to perceive the media as biased and powerful and to perceive that there was a chance the left-wing block would win the elections. Could it be that Netanyahu and the voters who adopted his claims regarding media bias were correct, and that mainstream media did indeed campaign against him before the elections? As demonstrated later on in this chapter, it is impossible to make a clear claim about a sweeping media bias in favor of or against the Right or Netanyahu. However, many decisions by mainstream journalists and editors serve his agenda and candidacy.

In his fourth term as a prime minister, Netanyahu has increased his influence over Israeli media (Caspi, 2015). In addition to his attempts to cancel the reform in public broadcasting described above, media-related initiatives during his fourth term have included issuing a permit allowing a right-wing-oriented cable channel to broadcast news, the splitting of Channel 2 between the two companies operating it under a franchise, and other steps previously described. All these "open skies" measures are expected to further weaken mainstream news organizations by dividing advertising revenues (which are limited, given a relatively small market size) among additional players.

MAINSTREAM NEWS CONSUMPTION AND MEDIA TRUST

Despite the establishment of many national, local, and sectorial media outlets, the majority of the Israeli audience consumes news from a small number of sources (Soffer, 2011), most of which can be defined as mainstream media (Pries, 2016; SimilarWeb Indicator, 2016). As previously mentioned, the mainstream media are either supervised by state authorities or cross-owned by dominant tycoons. The narrow distribution of news consumption might create a "fake pluralism" (Caspi, 2012) that reduces the odds of oppositional and marginal voices being heard. Schejter (2009) highlighted the way governmental policies over the years have bound these media to the Jewish Western mainstream voice and have eliminated others. Yet Sheaffer and Wolfsfeld (2009) and Balmas, Sheaffer, & Wolfsfeld (2014) conducted empirical analyses that demonstrate high levels of oppositional voices in Israeli newspapers.

Despite the Israeli audience's loyalty to mainstream media, media trust in Israel has traditionally been at medium levels in absolute terms (a score of around 3 on a scale from 1 to 5) and rather high in a comparative perspective (*Media Trust Indicator*, 2003). However, a sharp drop in Israelis' trust in the media has been recorded in recent years (Vigoda-Gadot, Cohen, & Mizrachi, 2016, p. 33). For example, the Israeli Democracy Index project reported in 2014 that only 29.7 percent of Israelis expressed "very much"

or “quite a lot of” trust in the media (Hermann et al., 2014, p. 61)—the lowest level of media trust recorded since the inception of the project in 2003. The media were the least trusted institution of those examined in the survey. Research found that mistrust of the media carries various ramifications. First and foremost, people who are skeptical about mainstream Israeli media tend to be more likely than their trusting counterparts to consume news from nonmainstream and extranational channels (Tsfati & Peri, 2006). Beyond this, mistrust in the media is associated with alienation from Israeli society among Arab Israelis (Tsfati, 2007) and with mistrust in the democratic process and the feeling that it is illegitimate among supporters of the Right (Tsfati & Cohen, 2005). Both of these associations are stronger for respondents who perceive the media as both untrustworthy and powerful.

ONLINE MEDIA AND POLITICS

Besides commercial and ideological news websites, the flourishing of social media has enabled politicians and other officials to communicate directly with the public. Surveys show that in 2017 the Internet penetration in Israel was almost 80 percent (the world rate is around 53 percent), and that about 60 percent of the Israeli population uses Facebook (*Internet World Stats*, 2018). The amount of time spent on Facebook per visitor per month among Israelis is among the largest in the world (Epstein, 2013). The prosperity of direct online political communication (such as Facebook) in competing with traditional media for public attention has contributed to the weakness of the media market, competing in-between and over a limited advertising supply (Caspi, 2012).

Although the print media market quickly reacted to the changing environment by establishing news websites, providing free printed versions of newspapers, and implementing new technology (Caspi, 2011), its future is questionable. The pessimists predict that print media will not survive the economic rivalry (Lehman-Wilzig, 2007). A more optimistic or cautious view argues for a long-term adjustment to the changing media environment, as has happened several times in media history (Caspi, 2011). And indeed, despite the proliferation of online political debate, the sociopolitical agenda in Israel is influenced mainly by the discourse taking place on traditional media (Soffer, 2011). Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Neiger's (2015) findings also support the adjustment of online and print media. They found that a future temporal orientation (projecting upcoming events, analyzing potential outcomes, and shaping collective expectations) was more prevalent in print media, whereas online news tended to concentrate on informing the public about recent events.

ISRAELI MEDIA COVERAGE OF POLITICS

This section reviews several characteristics of Israeli political media coverage, with a special focus on election periods.

News Frames for the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Three themes emerge from research about news coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict (see the chapter by Tal in this volume). The first has to do with the inherent ethnocentrism of the Israeli news media. As is usually the case in countries involved in violent conflicts, the Israeli media have been repeatedly shown to be “patriotic” by constructing news frames that reflect and reinforce the belief that Israel is virtuous and victimized and its enemies are the aggressors in the conflict. Wolfsfeld, Frosh, and Awabdy (2008) found that whenever the Israeli and Palestinian press covered incidents in which their own civilians were killed, the story was framed as a horrible tragedy carried out by a brutal enemy. When their own forces were the ones responsible for the civilian deaths, both sets of media tended to either deny the event by giving it less attention or used a form of rationalization or intellectualization to justify what had happened.

A second theme presents a more dynamic picture of how local journalists construct news frames of the conflict. The most important work in this area has been conducted by Kampf and Liebes (e.g., 2013), who have provided convincing evidence that the Israeli news media have modified and softened their view of the Palestinians as enemies in recent years. Israeli journalists have “made room” for voices from the other side to be heard. This includes “celeb terrorists”: enemy leaders and ordinary Palestinians, who are often portrayed as victims (Kampf & Liebes, 2013; see also Balmas, Sheaffer, & Wolfsfeld, 2014).

The final theme relates to ways in which the local press has framed efforts to achieve peace. Wolfsfeld (2004) found an inherent contradiction between the needs of peace and the needs of news. This ensured a steady stream of negative news about the Oslo peace process with the Palestinians and made it more difficult for the process to succeed. Sheaffer and Dvir-Gvirsman’s (2010) analysis of media coverage of the peace process confirms the mostly negative coverage of the Oslo process and provides convincing evidence that these negative frames had a significant impact on Israeli public opinion.

News Frames for Electoral Campaigns

When analyzing the functions of the media during electoral campaigns, scholars often distinguish between issue frames and game (or strategic) frames of campaign coverage (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). An *issue frame* is a media focus on substantive issues like the economy, ideology, and candidates’ positions on the issues. A *strategic frame*, on the other hand, is structured around the notion that politics is a strategic game; this leads to a focus on candidates’ strategies and tactics rather than an examination of issue positions and larger political forces. It therefore produces a portrayal of the campaign as a horse race among a few leaders.

Several studies tested whether the coverage of Israeli campaigns is characterized more by issue frames or by strategic frames (Shamir, Shamir, & Sheaffer, 2008; Sheaffer,

Weimann, & Tsfati, 2008; Weimann, Sheaffer, & Tsfati, 2008; Weimann & Wolfsfeld, 2002; Wolfsfeld & Weimann, 2001). The studies relied on systematic content analyses of television election coverage to provide the issue dimensions around which the campaigns were run and the relative focus on substance versus campaign strategy and game frame. The findings reveal that in most Israeli elections the game frame dominated over issues and ideology.

Sheaffer et al. (2008) conducted a content analysis of newspaper coverage of all sixteen election campaigns for the Knesset that took place in Israel between 1949 (the first elections) and 2003. The findings point to a declining number of issue frames in the news items and an increase in the domination of the game frame. Most election stories, most of the time, are dominated by a game frame and are presented as a horse race between candidates. This trend is also evident in studies documenting a dramatic increase in media reports of pre-election polls, focusing on election forecasts, portraying the campaign as a competition, and a decrease in reports on polls documenting the positions of the public on substantive issues (Weimann, 2001).

Mediatization of Politics

Mediatization has been defined as “a social change process in which media have become increasingly influential in and deeply integrated into different spheres of society,” especially politics (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014, p. 4). As a result of mediatization, the political media have become so central to the political process that political actors have had to adapt their behavior and communication to the requirements of the media; they have had to internalize the news values known as “media logic” (Wolfsfeld, 2011; Wolfsfeld & Sheaffer, 2006). Political actors are likely to compete for media attention because they believe that it influences policymaking and the public and is therefore a prerequisite for re-election. For example, Sheaffer (2008) found that members of the Knesset who understand the rules of “media logic” and are willing to play according to them are more successful at obtaining media attention and are more likely to be re-elected in the next elections. Cohen, Tsfati, & Sheaffer (2008) demonstrated that the greater the Knesset members’ perception of media influence on their voters was, the greater was their motivation to communicate with that public via the news media. Amsalem, Sheaffer, Walgrave, Loewen, and Soroka (2017) found that the more a member of the Knesset is motivated to get media coverage, the more likely he or she is to simplify his or her speeches.

Political Personalization

Political personalization in the media refers to a change in media coverage of politics in general, and of political campaigns in particular, manifested in an increase in media focus on the activities of individual politicians at the expense of abstract collective

entities such as parties, organizations, institutions, or policies (Balmas, Rahat, Sheaffer, & Shenhav, 2014; Rahat & Sheaffer, 2007).

Some Israeli scholars have argued that political personalization has indeed occurred in Israel. The decline of political parties and their role in politics, the central role of television, the growth of commercial media, and the accounts suggested by Caspi (1996) and Peri (2004) provide a rather firm foundation for the hypothesis that a process of personalization has taken place in Israel. An empirical analysis conducted by Rahat and Sheaffer (2007) monitored the political personalization in the media coverage of Israeli elections from 1948 to the 2003 elections. Until the 1980s, coverage of candidates incrementally gained equal status with that of the political parties. A surge in the share of media coverage that focused mainly on candidates took place in the 1981 Begin-Peres elections. Rahat and Sheaffer (2007) explain this abrupt increased focus on individual politicians by changes in candidate selection in the parties. Since then, the percentage of news items that have focused on candidates has continued to increase, while the percentage of news items focusing on parties has remained low.

Shenhav and Sheaffer (2008) found that the media coverage of political attacks changed from interparty ideological attacks to personal polemics, in which the focus shifted exclusively to individual politicians, who constantly attack each other in their communications. Regarding politicians' communication, Balmas et al. (2014) revealed a sharp increase in prime ministers' usage of self-reference discourse (such as "I").

The level of personalization in Israel seems high in a comparative perspective. Van Aelst, Sheaffer, et al. (2017) compared levels of personalized media coverage in Israel, the United States, and fourteen European countries during a noncampaign period. Their findings show that the focus on political actors versus institutions, on political actors versus parties, and on the Israeli prime minister (Netanyahu) versus other political actors is very high compared to the other countries in the study. In these three measures of personalized coverage, Israel was among the top three countries.

Negativity

Lengauer, Esser, and Berganza (2012) and Esser, Engesser, and Matthes (2017) define media negativity as being comprised of four components. *Tonality* is the "summary of all relevant voices and statements that lends the story a negative framing, irrespective of the topics or actors addressed"; *conflict centeredness* is "understood as an emphasis on disputes and disagreements between two (or more) sides of a problem"; *allegation of misconduct* is "an emphasis on one-sided criticism, often involving unidirectional accusations of incompetence, illegitimacy, or failure"; and *actor-related negativity* is "unfavorable portrayals of individuals' or collective political actors" (Esser et al., 2017, p. 72).

Esser et al. (2017) compared levels of negative media coverage in sixteen countries. Israel was ranked seventh in terms of overall level of negativity (combining all categories).

However, Israel was ranked second in the category “conflict” (“an emphasis on disputes and disagreements representing two (or more) sides of a problem”; p. 72).

As mentioned previously, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is usually portrayed using a negative frame. Analyses show that while the media could choose to emphasize, at least to a certain degree, issues such as reconciliation and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians, they have instead chosen to emphasize conflict and violence (e.g., Sheaffer & Dvir-Gvirsman, 2010; Wolfsfeld, 2004).

Regarding political election campaigns, several scholars have argued that one of the most noticeable characteristics of “horse race” coverage and the game frame is a focus on the issue of “sleaze,” resulting in attacks against candidates and in general an increase in negative coverage of the campaign. Sheaffer and Weimann (2005) found a sharp increase in negativity in television coverage of the parties and candidates in their analysis; in a second study, they reported a dramatic increase in the negativity expressed on television toward candidates and political parties (Sheaffer et al., 2008). This trend supports findings from other countries about the increased negativity in the coverage of election campaigns in recent years.

Political Bias

The question of political bias in the Israeli media has always been relevant, as discussed in the first section, and is now perhaps even more so. Research examining the issue of bias in media coverage generally examines election campaign periods and focuses on two main areas of possible imbalance: media access and media valence. *Access* to the media is indicated by the time and space given to each one of the political parties and candidates competing in the campaign (the quantity of coverage), while *media valence* refers to the degree of favorable or unfavorable coverage of parties and candidates (the quality of coverage). Since the demise of party-owned media, most allegations of political-ideological media bias have come from right-wing politicians, who argue that because most journalists hold a left-liberal worldview, their coverage is clearly tilted to the left (Sheaffer & Weimann, 2005). For example, in the final stages of the 1999 campaign, Prime Minister Netanyahu attacked the media for having a clear bias in favor of the One Israel Party (the new Labor) and the Left. In a notable speech that received prime media coverage, Netanyahu claimed that the media and journalists were “afraid” that Likud and the Right would win the elections.

Regarding the quantity of coverage, almost all the empirical studies of bias in coverage revealed no evidence for such bias. Sheaffer et al. (2008) found a perfect balance in the accessibility of the two big parties, Likud and Labor (and of Kadima in 2006), in each of the election campaigns. Minor differences always favor the party holding power during the campaign period. These findings suggest that maximal balance is maintained in the parties’ accessibility to the media. The minor differences that exist can be explained by newsworthiness or, more specifically, by the ruling party’s higher status, which renders it more newsworthy.

Studies of media valence (i.e., quality of coverage) did not support the claim of political bias either. Sheafer et al. (2008) found that in television coverage of five election campaigns, the incumbent party suffered from more attacks compared to the other party (or parties, in 2006). The exceptions to this rule occurred in 1996, when the incumbent Labor Party was attacked to a lesser degree than was the Likud Party, and in 2003, when the incumbent Likud Party was not attacked more than the Labor Party. Even these exceptions work against the argument of political bias (see Sheafer & Weimann, 2005). In the newspaper articles about all elections from 1948 through 2003, the incumbent party always received a greater amount of criticism than the main opposition party. In sum, no support was found in the analysis for the political bias hypothesis in Israeli election coverage.

Political Satire

Israel has a long tradition of political satire, spanning all media types (newspapers, theater, radio, television, and street pamphlets) and dating back to the pre-state period (Alexander, 1985). Currently, political comedy on television enjoys the highest exposure. The most popular television political comedy show for more than a decade, *Eretz Nehederet* (literally, “A wonderful country”), is one of Israel’s most watched programs, with ratings almost regularly around 30 percent (e.g., Kitain, 2017). Critics have described the show as an extremely sharp, powerful, and effective satire, even compared to other successful comedy shows in the West. Content research found that the show portrays politicians as unreliable, immoral, and lacking leadership abilities and intelligence, both in absolute terms and when compared to politicians’ portrayals in news and current affairs shows (Balmas, 2014). Audience research demonstrated that as in other places, exposure to such portrayals is associated with political mistrust (Tsfati, Tukachinsky, & Peri, 2009), especially among audiences that have low exposure to news programs (Balmas, 2014). Like other Israeli media, this show and another popular political comedy show—*Gav Hauma*—have been accused of left-wing biases (including by former Minister of Internal Security Gilad Erdan; see Israel Hayom, 2017). At the same time, right-wing outlets and websites offer right-wing humor.

In sum, the Israeli media have always been perceived as a key tool for political influence. The long-term effects of this attitude on the Israeli media and public have been reviewed here, with special attention to the tremendous changes taking place in the online era. At the time of writing, the Israeli media formally operate in an advanced, democratic, and pluralistic environment. However, the influence of “private censorship,” which in contrast to ideological, moral, or military censorship is aimed at serving the owner’s political and economic interests (Negbi, 2011), is becoming increasingly evident in the media market, as well as in the journalistic product. This dangerous censorship weakens the ability of journalists to report and criticize political issues and figures, allows the extensive intervention by political figures that we witness nowadays, and jeopardizes Israeli democracy.

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CHAPTER 38

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ISRAELI NEOLIBERALISM

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HALFWAY through the seven decades that have passed since Israel's proclamation as a sovereign state in 1948, it embarked on a far-reaching transition from a statist and developmental political economy to a neoliberal one. This transition was accompanied by dramatic shifts from ruinous public indebtedness to zealous fiscal probity and from systems of employment, investment, and trade that were sheltered and heavily subsidized by the state to a paramount role for market forces. Reviewing this evolution, in this chapter we describe and explain the most salient features of change and continuity in Israel's political economy. Accordingly, the chapter is organized around two main questions: What are the main features of Israel's transformation to neoliberal capitalism? What political-economic forces explain this transformation?

Focusing on the first question, the first section of this chapter details the particular characteristics of the unevenness and incompleteness of economic liberalization in Israel. The second and third sections explain these characteristics of contemporary Israeli neoliberalism. Utilizing a historical-institutionalist perspective we emphasize the interplay between the ideas and interests that have guided the actions of local neoliberal actors and the institutional context—the policy legacies and power structures—within which they have operated. We argue in these sections that the adoption of neoliberal capitalism in Israel has been characterized by substantial compromises that its advocates could not avoid. We conclude with some reflections on the future of neoliberalism in Israel.

NEOLIBERALISM IN ISRAEL: UNEVEN AND UNEQUAL

In the 2016 *Economic Survey of Israel* its economy is described as follows:

The Israeli economy is enjoying its 13th consecutive year of growth, demonstrating remarkable resilience. Increases in output...have exceeded those of most other OECD countries....[T]he employment rate has continued to rise steadily, the unemployment rate has fallen...and the external balance is in surplus.... The fiscal strategy adopted in 2003 has kept public debt on a downward trend and brought the tax burden well below the OECD average.... The banking system is profitable and well capitalized... [and] Israel also has a vibrant high-tech sector.

(OECD, 2016, p. 14)

With so much good news, what is there not to like? The survey identifies “two important challenges.” One is the incomplete reach of the competitively driven growth model. Indeed, a “marked disparity” is observed between “highly dynamic exposed industries and a large, low-productivity sheltered sector.” The latter is riven with inefficiency and lack of competition, and it drives the cost of living upward. The other Achilles heel of the Israeli model is that fiscal policy is “not conducive to inclusive growth” (OECD, 2016, p. 10). In 1985 Israel embarked on a dramatic fiscal transition from profligacy to prudence, which was consolidated in the early 2000s, when government spending as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) plummeted from the top to the bottom quartile of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (2016, p. 25).

The decline in Israel’s relative public spending compared to other OECD countries mainly resulted from retrenchment of its welfare state. In line with neoliberal orthodoxy, as the social safety net wore thin, participation in paid work rose. But the combination of commodification into largely low-paid jobs and cutbacks of cash benefits for the poor brought Israel’s poverty rate to one of the highest in the OECD. Moreover, during the early 2000s governments adopted regressive shifts in tax policy, exacerbating income inequality. Israel’s Gini index for *disposable* income (after taxes and transfers) continues to be internationally exceptional, despite the fact that inequality of *market* incomes has been declining (Dahan, 2017).

To summarize, while in Israel market-enhancing policies may have placed “the economy” on a path of enviably high and stable growth, when viewed from a disaggregated perspective, it is seen to be riven by sectoral dualism, and the fruits of its expansion have been very unevenly distributed. The OECD has called out the Israeli government by (a) spotlighting the economic injustice suffered by its most vulnerable populations, (b) pointing out that increased public spending is desirable and fiscally feasible, (c) urging

that proactive measures be taken vis-à-vis Israel's large minority of Palestinian Arab citizens, and (d) exposing the way that large swathes of the economy have in fact been spared the dictates of market discipline. At the same time, it has conspicuously refrained from addressing the state's continued fiscal commitment to cherished national projects, notably military strength and the settlement and continuing occupation of territories conquered by Israel in 1967.

These uneven and unequal outcomes, we argue, are indicative of the current state of Israel's evolving "neoliberal settlement." This settlement rests on a series of changes in policy and the institutional governance of policymaking over two decades, which dismantled the old economic power structure based on collaboration among the public, quasi-public, and private sectors of Israeli big business, with the peak labor organization (Histadrut) acting as the pivot (Grinberg, 1991; Shalev, 1992). The Histadrut forfeited its ownership of many of the largest enterprises in the country and was obliged to give up its role as the dominant provider of health services and occupational pensions (Grinberg, 2017). In the public sector per se, most government corporations and services underwent either outright privatization or a transition to market-based performance standards (Paz-Fuchs, Mandelkern, & Galnoor, 2018). The following subsections summarize the main changes that have taken place in key aspects of the Israeli economy.

Industry and Finance

Most of the privatized pillars of the old Israeli economy were placed in the hands of corporations controlled by a few wealthy families (Maman, 2017). At the same time, the country's largest banks were required to give up their pervasive role as owners and financiers of nonbank enterprises and were barred from controlling new financial instruments. Consequently, the banks lost a substantial share of the business credit market to a growing sector of institutional investors, although their domination of consumer banking has been preserved (Banking Competition Committee, 2016). While the financial sector has thus become more pluralistic, each of its branches is dominated by a small number of big players.

The industrial and high-end services sectors have experienced broadly similar trends. On the one hand, they were privatized and internationalized, and their range of activities was expanded, notably due to Israel's rise as a technological power. But none of this eroded the past pattern of concentrated ownership and restricted competition (Bahar, 2016). A number of traditionally protected domestic branches were indeed opened up to imports, which lowered consumer prices and eliminated or reformed uncompetitive and subsidized firms (e.g., textile production and air travel). However, in other sectors established monopolies and oligopolies maintained economic concentration—most notably in what the OECD describes as "the entire food chain," from agricultural production to supermarkets (Broude & Herman, 2014).

The Labor Market

In the labor market, inequality between workers has been rising, and simultaneously labor's share of national income has been declining (Kristal, 2013). As in other countries, along with external and domestic liberalization, structural economic changes and declines in the power of organized labor have played a role. Structural changes have also exacerbated inequality. Deindustrialization at the low end of the economy has been accompanied by an expanding, internationally integrated tech sector and highly profitable financial services at the high end. Productivity gaps between low-skilled and high-skilled workers have been accentuated, while at the same time high-growth sectors have experienced sharp rises in pay and benefits, especially for executives. In addition, privatization and casualization eliminated sheltered segments of the labor market that in Israel had formerly been exceptional in scale. Partly as a result of the previous two factors, sharp declines in unionization and collective bargaining also widened pay gaps. Union membership declined dramatically, from around 80 percent of the workforce in the early 1980s to only 27 percent in 2016 (Cohen, 2017). While collective agreements are quite often extended to nonunionized workers, the growing scope of decentralized collective bargaining has contributed to rising wage differentials (Kristal & Cohen, 2007).

The Histadrut's massive loss of membership (and the rise of alternative unions), the state's partial withdrawal from political bargaining with the peak organizations of workers and employers, and the decentralization of collective bargaining have diminished or supplanted Israel's earlier corporatist system of industrial relations (Mundlak, 2007; Preminger, 2018). Concurrently the state as an employer aggressively pursued the goal of shrinking the secure, unionized public employment sector. In state-owned industries and infrastructure monopolies, this was achieved by privatization or by recruiting new workers as "second generation" employees with inferior status and benefits. In the public services many administrative and social service jobs were casualized, either by eliminating their civil service status or outsourcing them to temporary work agencies and subcontractors (Mundlak, 2017; Paz-Fuchs et al., 2018). Nevertheless, powerful segments of the public sector workforce, including civil servants, workers in the electricity monopoly, and career officers in the military and police who are not formally unionized, have successfully preserved their privileges.

The Welfare State

A statistical comparison of the programmatic composition of welfare state spending in Israel, the United States, and five Western European nations shows that Israel and the United States cluster together, primarily as a result of their shared commitment to public employee pensions (coupled with low universal retirement allowances) and very low disbursements on both housing and "active" labor market programs. In addition,

aggregate social spending has been on a declining trajectory. Data for thirty-five OECD members measuring the GDP share of public social expenditure show that whereas in 1990 Israel was at the median, by 2016 its rank had fallen to 29, trailed by countries like Mexico and Turkey.

Welfare state retrenchment was concentrated on programs that support economically vulnerable sectors: child allowances (especially beneficial to two large and poverty-prone minorities, Arab citizens and ultra-Orthodox Jews), minimum income and other selective benefits to the needy, and housing assistance. Together these types of benefit went from accounting for one-quarter of social spending in the mid-1990s to only one-tenth today. The slack was taken up primarily by public employee pensions and a range of “loyalty benefits” by which the state compensates specific categories of citizens for contributing to highly valued national priorities, most notably in the military sphere but also related to Jewish immigration and memorializing the Holocaust.¹

THE STATE AND THE POLITICS OF NEOLIBERALISM

What explains uneven and unequal neoliberalism in Israel? Any analysis of the political economic transformation that took place in Israel cannot ignore exogenous structural factors that influenced most emerging and advanced economies during the 1970s and 1980s. Prominent among these are the rise of financial globalization, the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, and the economic stagflation of the 1970s, which justified the abandonment of Keynesian economics. In Israel these global influences joined chronic problems of inflation, deficit spending and trade imbalance, sharply exacerbated by oil price rises and an explosion in military spending following the 1973 war. After several years of economic crisis and escalating inflation, in July 1985 the government adopted a long-awaited stabilization plan that inaugurated Israel’s transition from developmentalism to neoliberalism.

The impetus for change did not merely reflect a functionalist response to exogenous circumstances. Rather, to borrow from Kingdon (1984), political-economic transformation was enabled by the coincidence of economic problems, political will, and determined political entrepreneurs. The most prominent and persistent of these entrepreneurs were economists and state bureaucrats, especially at the Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Israel, whose interests and beliefs drove their long-standing desire to control economic policymaking and force governments to internalize what they saw as self-evident truths. Already in the 1950s Ministry of Finance and Bank of Israel officials, with the intellectual support of economists in academia, were eager supporters of economic liberalization. They were highly critical of politicized economic management during the developmentalist stage and saw its replacement as necessary

even before the 1970s and 1980s economic crisis (Mandelkern, 2016, 2017; Maron & Shalev, 2017).

The Quest of State Agencies for Political Power

The political interests of economic state agencies reflected an aspiration for greater control over economic policymaking (Maman & Rosenhek, 2011; Maron & Shalev, 2017). The power struggles between them and other political actors—politicians, organized interests, and other government ministries—constituted an effort to improve their position on the “board of directors” of the economy, from which they had been marginalized since the formation of the state. The period between 1973 and 1985 had only worsened their subordinate status. Their role was essentially reduced to raising revenues and printing money to cover budgets over which they had little control and which effectively subsidized a wide range of economic actors, including exporters (through frequent devaluations), creditors from business lenders to mortgagees (through loans at nominal instead of real rates), and employees (through guaranteed inflation-adjusted wages). While fueling inflation and exacerbating budget deficits, these policies served the interests of the big banks and business groups, including the growing “military-industrial complex” under their control, which enjoyed structural power in the economy and strong connections with the political elite (Nitzan & Bichler, 2002). The Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Israel were also powerless to block expansion of the public sector or limit governmental lines of subsidized credit, both of which were crucial for preventing unemployment and maintaining political legitimacy. In short, in this period—which Israeli economists dubbed “the lost decade” (of economic growth)—the economic technocrats experienced a precipitous decline in their ability to shape policy.

As annual inflation exceeded 400 percent and public debt and deficits spiraled, the technocrats embarked on a determined campaign to achieve autonomy from both the state’s operational agencies (e.g., “spending” ministries and local municipalities) and the influence of politicians over economic policy. Their determination was reinforced by the belief that depoliticized management is crucial to effective government, just as the enhancement of market competitiveness and economic openness are essential for social and economic prosperity. Theories of the mainsprings of economic growth and efficient governance interacted with and were fortified by the technocrats’ drive for professional and institutional autonomy.

The Growing Power of Economic Bureaucracies after 1985

Key officials from the Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Israel, in collaboration with senior academic economists in Israel and the United States, played a decisive role in winning professional and political acceptance for the comprehensive stabilization plan adopted in 1985 (Mandelkern & Shalev, 2010). In addition to ending inflation by freezing

the exchange rate and consumer prices and cutting the budget deficit, the plan included structural reforms that aimed at dismantling mechanisms of inflation compensation, reducing public sector employment, and liberalizing the capital market. The plan was accompanied by legislative amendments that institutionalized the independence of the central bank and its capacity to pursue “responsible” monetary and exchange-rate policies and provided the Ministry of Finance with remarkable powers of control over fiscal policy (Ben-Bassat & Dahan, 2006; Maman & Rosenhek, 2017). These statutory reforms, with intellectual origins in economic theories of efficient governance, supported and supplemented the fiscal and monetary restraint mandated by the stabilization plan.

To some extent, the reforms of 1985 built on previous steps. During the 1960s two governments had attempted to deal with severe macroeconomic and fiscal problems by redefining state obligations and imposing greater market discipline on both labor and capital (Mandelkern, 2016; Shalev, 1984). The first initiative was a failure from the outset, and the second was abandoned following Israel’s victory in the 1967 war. In the following decade, after the Labor Party lost the 1977 elections, the Likud-led government entered office with promises of radical liberalization. While this ambition was abandoned, two key reforms were initiated. One liberalized foreign currency transactions, and the other cancelled a long-standing arrangement granting the large Histadrut-owned sector of the economy guaranteed access to government-subsidized investment finance (Ben-Porath, 1983; Grinberg, 1991).

The stabilization plan did not and could not turn Israel overnight into a neoliberal political economy. Instead, it represented the opening shot in a long-running battle for institutional re-engineering of economic policymaking (Shafir & Peled, 2002, ch. 9). This battle was fought to a significant extent by engineering institutional changes that altered the rules of the political-economic game and thereby the power relations among political-economic actors. By regularizing the emergency powers it first received in 1985, the Ministry of Finance gained the ability to promote its own policies directly in an annual “Arrangements Law.” The Ministry of Finance also replaced the financial controllers of all operational state agencies with its own functionaries and formulated and promoted “fiscal rules”: a legislative framework for limiting the short-term discretion of politicians regarding the overall state budget. Likewise, in the 1990s the Bank of Israel’s control over monetary policy—and thereby its influence over macroeconomic policy in general—was reinforced by the adoption of “inflation targeting,” namely inflexible price stability goals. The bank’s independence reached its formal culmination with the 2010 amendment of the Bank of Israel Law, which prohibits the government from dismissing its governor in the event of a policy disagreement. In parallel, regulators in different economic domains—most prominently antitrust and finance—were also granted greater autonomy from the influence and potential pressures of elected politicians.

This array of institutional changes reflects a drive to neutralize veto players both inside and outside of the state and direct attention to an underappreciated dimension of neoliberalism: its attempt to limit the impact of societal pressures on economic regulation by the state. Politicized decision-making is susceptible to unwanted pressures from either the “masses,” through democratic representation, or “special interests” and “rent-seekers.”

In this sense, economic technocrats are not so much blind believers in market fundamentalism as they are committed to rationalization—through depoliticization—of economic decision-making (cf. Fourcade-Gourinchas & Babb, 2002). This, of course, resonates with their interest in gaining the institutional capacity to implement economic policies as they see fit.

Building Coalitions for Change

One of the most important components of Israel's political-economic transformation has been radical redefinition of the roles and powers of the Histadrut. Prior to 1948 the Histadrut was both a critical instrument of Jewish settlement and the backbone of the dominant Labor Party. After statehood was achieved, Labor governments acted to reinforce and expand the Histadrut's functions and capacities as an employer; a provider of social protection through collective bargaining, pension funds, and health-care; and a confederation of labor unions (Shalev, 1992). The state took various steps to provide the Histadrut with associational monopoly powers and to consolidate and subsidize its economic and social service functions. Conveniently, the state delegated responsibilities to and engaged in corporatist bargaining with an organization that was under the political control of the governing party. Under this system the Histadrut provided the party with finance, infrastructure, and access to masses of voters, while its multifunctional roles allowed the state, which was controlled by the party, to avoid new and costly obligations.

In the 1970s and early 1980s the Histadrut's subsidized, quasi-state functions became increasingly costly to the state, yet its continuing political importance for the Labor Party rendered the status quo compelling to the party's senior politicians. But by the 1990s the Histadrut had become more of a political burden than a benefit to rising aspirants to power within the party, leading their interests to converge with those of the economic bureaucrats. Their combined efforts succeeded in bringing about the demise of the "system of 1948," first by withholding state aid to the Histadrut's ailing business empire, then by separating it from the healthcare function on which mass membership depended, and finally by a series of state initiatives that ended the Histadrut's monopoly over private sector occupational pensions (Grinberg, 2017). With the Histadrut transformed into a labor union and the Labor Party in decline and disarray, the historically strong ties between the two have essentially unraveled (Mandelkern & Rahat, 2017).

The *de facto* collaboration between economic bureaucrats and Labor politicians in dismantling the old Histadrut is an example of a coalition for change that was effective but not always harmonious. In the 1994 health services reform, universal health insurance was the price that the Ministry of Finance was forced by Labor politicians to pay in order to implement their shared goal of removing health services from Histadrut control (Asiskovitch, 2017). Unable to prevent the legislation, the technocrats responded by promoting classically neoliberal practices of damage control, including the creation of a

quasi-market of competing providers and stimulating the growth of complementary private insurance schemes (Filc, 2018).

In cases where neoliberal reforms might have gained the attention of political parties or organized interests or were sure to be opposed by powerful state agencies, the Ministry of Finance was required to build coalitions, move gradually and circumspectly, and take preemptive action to neutralize other bureaucracies. One example that combines all of these elements was a radical reform that relieved employers of their obligation to contribute to social insurance funds while it expanded the Treasury's responsibility for funding. Implemented in a series of pointedly low-key steps during the 1980s and 1990s, this maneuver succeeded in undermining the autonomy of the bureaucracy responsible for social insurance administration, thereby opening the way to the benefit cuts of the early 2000s (Koreh & Shalev, 2017). In another well-known case, a welfare-to-work program (the "Wisconsin Plan"), Ministry of Finance officials succeeded in bypassing the nominally responsible agency (the government Employment Service) and establishing a parallel structure directly under their control. However public hostility to the reform, fanned by opponents in advocacy organizations, the mass media, and the state itself, eventually emboldened politicians to cancel the program (Mandelkern & Koreh, 2017).

These examples illustrate that while the political power of the state agencies leading the neoliberal reforms was substantially enhanced and institutionalized, they did not become omnipotent. They were obliged to make compromises in order to win certain battles, and in some cases they lost. Their capacity to generate substantial changes was also not uniform across different policy domains. The influence of the Bank of Israel has been more significant when it utilized its control over monetary policy to force budgetary restraint on the government, as it did early in 2001 (Mandelkern, 2011). The influence of the Ministry of Finance is especially significant in the context of intrastate bureaucratic politics, where it demands policy reforms by utilizing its powers over the budgetary process (Cohen, 2014; see also the chapter by Gilad & Cohen in this volume). On the other hand, as discussed later, in areas attached to national projects and/or of cardinal importance to governing politicians, attempts to impose neoliberal discipline are often frustrated.

The State as a Neoliberal Agent

The crucial role played by state bodies in promoting political-economic transformation in Israel, and the outcomes generated, pose questions for a number of influential perspectives on neoliberalism. One popular view sees neoliberalism as a blind belief in the superiority of unfettered markets. As David Harvey (2005) argued, in practice no such impeccable ideational logic can be found. Harvey interpreted neoliberalism as a strategic re-equilibration of class relations in response to increases in the political-economic power of labor at the expense of capital. The Israeli experience shows that the state has its own agenda and is far more proactive than a purely class-based perspective allows.

Another approach interprets neoliberalism as the “withering away” of the state, a full-scale retreat from its social and economic responsibilities. Nevertheless, as many scholars have pointed out, neoliberal capitalism is characterized by the *renewed* and *reformed* engagement of the state and the government in economic affairs (e.g., Ban, 2016; Vogel, 1996; on Israel see Maman & Rosenhek, 2012). The state plays an active role in building and constructing markets and in regulating them to enhance their openness and competitiveness and minimize its own vulnerabilities. State agencies often behave as if they deeply mistrust free markets, relying instead on a panoply of regulatory instruments to shape markets in ways that ameliorate the state’s structural dependence on capital.

While the state remains an active and potent force under neoliberal capitalism, its actions reflect a *market-conforming* logic instead of the *market-correcting* logic that underpinned Keynesianism and developmentalism. In attempting to enforce market-conforming policies, government bodies in Israel remain highly involved in the macro-economic management of the economy and in regulating financial, labor, and commodities markets. Regulation for enhancing competitiveness is most prominent in the financial markets. One prominent example is a series of still-ongoing reforms aimed at dismantling bank-controlled financial conglomerates by forcing them to sell off important chunks of their operations (e.g., in the domains of long-term savings and credit card services).

Neoliberal policies may also follow a *market-exploiting* logic, that is, the unleashing of market forces to hamper the ability of societal interests (and their political representatives) to impose binding and inflexible spending commitments or undermine the policymaking autonomy of state bodies. Prominent examples include the imposition of market discipline on citizens by the Wisconsin Plan; attempts to discipline capitalists by enhancing market competition between them; and using privatization to weaken centers of societal power that encroach on state autonomy (e.g., the pension funds of the Histadrut). From this perspective, neoliberalism in Israel should be understood as a state project that seeks simultaneously to overcome the limits and contradictions of earlier models of economic performance and to restructure the politics and governance of economic policymaking.

PAST LEGACIES AND POWER STRUCTURES

The previous section highlighted the essential role played by state agencies in the political-economic transformation described in the first section. These agencies, and the technocrats who administer them, have expanded their political power and authority over economic policymaking and substantially diminished the influence of powerful interests on government policy. Yet as the first section emphasized, neoliberalism in Israel is also characterized by compromises and limited reach. The unevenness of neoliberalism in Israel, we contend, reflects the encounter of neoliberal

policies and programs with historical legacies and social structures that became deeply embedded in Israel's political economy.

The Shadow of a Stratified Past

Israel's corporatist and developmentalist past, characterized by intensive involvement of the government in the economy and extensive political influence of organized interests on economic policies, is often confused with social-democratic values and practices. But as various authors have shown (e.g., Rosenhek, 2011; Shalev, 1992), Israel's political economy in the past was characterized by stratification between different social groups, largely according to their proximity to the political center and the veteran European-born (Ashkenazi) settlers (see the chapter by Smootha in this volume). Consequently, although economic inequality has been rising since the 1980s, even prior to this Israel was a deeply stratified society in which social policy and a panoply of other instruments of government intervention played a cardinal role in the creation and perpetuation of unequal life chances based on nationality, ethnicity, and gender (Shafir & Peled, 2002).

The unleashing of market forces and undermining of social protection ushered in by neoliberalism have a well-documented tendency to reinforce prevailing social and economic gaps (see Kristal, 2013 for evidence on the Israeli case). At the same time, neoliberalism's insistence on universal inclusion in the market and its promotion of education and initiative as instruments of individual advancement potentially open up new avenues of upward mobility for subordinate segments of society—notably, in the Israeli context, Arab citizens and Jews who originated in Arab countries (Mizrachim). Moreover, neoliberalism's glorification of individualism and its drive to level the playing field on which competition takes place could theoretically challenge the twin underpinnings of the marginalization of Israel's Arab citizens: the state's Jewish self-definition and its commitment to rewarding citizens for contributing to national projects from which most non-Jews are excluded (see also the chapter by Galnoor in this volume).

In practice, while intensifying disadvantage and precarity for many Mizrachim and Arabs, neoliberalism has had beneficial effects for others, contributing to expansion of their middle-class component (Arlosoroff, 2017; Cohen & Leon, 2008; Dahan, 2016). Privatization of public and Histadrut enterprises and the unleashing of market and quasi-market forces in the domain of public and former Histadrut services transformed state-subsidized, Jewish-only workplaces into profit- and efficiency-driven businesses, leading to downgrading for some and new opportunities for others. In the private sector, globally themed shopping malls are an example of "neoliberal spaces" created by economic liberalization (Shtern, 2016), specifically providing new employment opportunities for Arab women in retail (Marantz, Kalev, & Lewin-Epstein, 2014).

A profound innovation of the neoliberal era is a reform of higher education, which ended the oligopoly of research universities and created a network of colleges in proximity to peripheral populations, with generally less selective admission and performance standards. Another notable development is that traditionally empty promises to

equalize state spending on the Arab and Jewish sectors have been overlaid by neoliberal policies aimed at integration through the market, such as empowerment programs to raise labor force aspirations and participation of Arab women, and encouragement of Arab entrepreneurs to invest in the Arab enclave economy (Sa'ar, 2016). At the same time, for the large segment of Arabs and Mizrachim without a professional qualification, the secondary segment of the labor market offers precarious and partial employment, deepening their structural economic inferiority. In promoting flexible labor markets and focusing single-mindedly on moving the poor into employment, rather than on enhancing worker skills, the state has expanded the ranks of the working poor (Stier, 2011).

The Legacy of Economic Concentration

One of the most prominent features of unevenness in Israel's contemporary political economy is the concentration of economic power among a small number of actors, behind which stand in many cases a specific family or "tycoon" (Maman, 2017). While this feature contrasts conspicuously with the neoliberal ideal of market competition, it may be explained as the result of the limited ability of neoliberal agents to implement their goals in the context of concentrated economic power, and the compromises that they had to make.

The similarity of the present level of economic concentration to that of the past reflects how the privatization of Histadrut and government corporations was carried out. In contrast to the paradigmatic case of Thatcher's privatization in the United Kingdom, in which shares were offered to employees and the mass public, public corporations in Israel were sold to big local and foreign investors. In the United Kingdom the implementation of privatization was shaped by the Conservatives' interest in legitimizing privatization and winning voters away from Labor (Garrett, 1993). In Israel privatization was primarily led by the Ministry of Finance, whose main political aims were to swiftly relieve the state from the obligations and debts of public and semipublic corporations and to insulate the government from future demands for subsidy by their privatized successors. In part, this approach was justified by the belief, used at the time to legitimate the privatization of Russian assets to would-be oligarchs, that competition would follow privatization. In practice, the outcome was the creation of a new social class of super-rich capitalists.

Leaving the Strongest until Last

By their nature, economic liberalization policies were opposed by those who had benefited from past policies. One explanation for the unevenness of Israeli neoliberalism is the wide variation in power resources among different losers from liberalization. The differential impact of neoliberal policies on employees is perhaps the clearest instance. Both the structural economic power of unionized blue-collar workers in public utilities,

and the strategic positions (or high levels of social and cultural capital) of upper white-collar workers like senior civil servants and university professors, allowed them to preserve their privileged positions. In contrast, the seemingly secure male blue-collar workforce in the Histadrut enterprises and state-owned military industries, as well as low-level clerical, administrative, and service workers (primarily Mizrahi women), either lost their jobs or were forced to accept radical downgrading of their conditions of employment (Benjamin, 2011).

Other dualizing practices were explicitly invoked by the state (cf. Emmenegger et al., 2012). For example, in many of the public bodies in which unionized workers did retain their rights, the state led the way in casualizing new employment, redefining formerly secure jobs and occupations (including some professionals in the social services) as temporary positions or utilizing market-exploiting practices like temp agencies and outsourcing (Mundlak, 2017). Relatedly, liberalizing reforms were unevenly applied to different “generations” of workers. The consent of powerful unions to privatization and changes in employment conditions was obtained, in many cases, by shielding veteran workers from their consequences.

A prominent site of preferential treatment during the neoliberal era has been Israel’s successful hi-tech industry. Marking it as an economic champion, the state—the Ministry of Finance included—continued to nurture this industry even after the adoption of the neoliberal agenda. Yet so far state support has allowed the Israeli hi-tech sector to focus almost exclusively on research and development and the sale of successful start-ups, leaving it vulnerable and dependent on the US economy. This also explains why the benefits of the “start-up nation” have been distributed so unevenly, as it provides job opportunities and occasional windfall fortunes mainly to highly educated professional workers (Zehavi & Breznitz, 2017).

Israel’s Distinctive State Projects

The creation of the State of Israel realized the aspiration of the Zionist movement for an independent state for the Jewish people. The proclamation of statehood in 1948 prompted both resistance from the indigenous Arab population and external invasion, and although in the ensuing conflict the Jewish side succeeded in expanding its territory and initiating or facilitating the permanent departure of most of the former Arab inhabitants, the prestate period bequeathed three interconnected legacies that have become institutionalized as state projects. The first is militarism, which both responds to and reinforces the conflict between Israel and its neighbors and the Palestinian national movement. The second is the occupation, which maintains Israeli control over the territories it conquered in 1967. The third is Zionism, which grafts onto Israel’s “procedural” liberal democracy a persistent drive for Jewish demographic, territorial, and political dominance (Smootha, 2016). All three of these projects contribute to the unevenness of Israeli neoliberalism. They entail substantial state expenditures yet are protected against market-exploiting discipline by multiple forms of power.

The official share of Israel's GDP accounted for by military spending has declined precipitously since the 1970s, recently stabilizing at under 6 percent—still significantly more than the other OECD leader, the United States.² The military establishment is the only major state sector that has succeeded in retaining a substantial degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the Ministry of Finance. This is explained by the dependence of both political elites and ordinary citizens on the military to deal with security threats, the centrality of military service in the lives of Jewish Israelis, the cultural depth of militarism, and the influence of an informal “security network” of current and former military personnel (Kimmerling, 1993; Sheffer & Barak, 2013; see also the chapter by Peri in this volume).

Military service is mandatory in Israel for most Jewish men and women and for a small minority of Arab citizens. An extremely generous and institutionally separate welfare state for soldiers and their families makes a substantial contribution to the economic burden of military conflict and militarism on the state. It is the prime example of a broader class of “loyalty benefits,” which reward citizens (almost exclusively Jews) for contributing to state projects. Other examples are incentives and exemptions for Jewish immigrants and cash benefits for groups such as Holocaust Survivors whom the state wishes to honor (Friedman & Shalev, 2010). Noncash benefits, including generous land and housing subsidies, development grants, infrastructure projects, and tax breaks, are targeted to zones of Jewish settlement within Israel proper and in the occupied territories (Allegra, Handel, & Maggor, 2017). Along with the state's generally lower funding of social services and infrastructure for Israel's Palestinian citizens (currently one-fifth of the total), loyalty benefits contribute to unequal treatment of Arabs and Jews (Gharrah, 2016).

The previously mentioned burdens also generate some economic benefits. The occupation provides Israel with land for settlement, a market for consumer products and services, and at times a major source of cheap labor. The state's heavy investment in the development and production of armaments and intelligence-related technologies has contributed notably to the growth of arms production and information and communication technology industries, which contribute 12 percent and 19 percent, respectively, to total export revenues.³ At the same time, Israel's fiscal bureaucrats have great difficulty imposing depoliticization and institutional subordination on the politicians, bureaucrats, and lobbies that set policy in relation to national projects. They have, however, enjoyed some limited successes in integrating neoliberal logic into programs linked to militarism (funding of benefits for reservists), Zionism (immigrant absorption through vouchers), and the occupation (market incentives to developers and homeowners).

WHAT'S NEXT? THE FUTURE OF NEOLIBERALISM IN ISRAEL

In Israel and elsewhere neoliberalism has been challenged in recent years, and not just by the “usual losers.” In Israel the challenge took the form of six weeks of mass protests in

the summer of 2011, led by young and educated members of the middle class, the supposed beneficiaries of neoliberalism. The immediate grievances concerned rising living costs, most prominently housing prices. But the protests reflected wider and deeper discontent with the realities of uneven neoliberalism, including the declining relative income of the younger generation of the Jewish middle class. Rising inequality and growing withdrawal of the state from what Israelis perceive as its moral responsibility for citizens' collective well-being contributed to the popularity of the protest. The question with which we conclude concerns the consequences of this discontent for the future of neoliberalism in Israel.

For the state agencies that championed neoliberalism, the 2011 protest appears to have triggered a partial recalibration of their agenda and policies (Alon-Barkat & Gilad, 2016). In recent years the Bank of Israel has consistently advocated expansion of public and social spending and has opposed tax cuts. The Ministry of Finance, which was responsible for privatization of the Histadrut pension funds, recognized the need for at least minimal coverage for low-earning and nonunionized workers. More broadly, it became open to limited expansion of public expenditures (within a fiscal rules framework). These and other examples suggest that the same bodies that previously saw their main task as dismantling past political-economic structures are now interested in "fine-tuning" neoliberal policies, not least as a bid to legitimate these policies.

This has placed the economic technocrats in the position of criticizing political elites not only from the socioeconomic Left but occasionally also from the Right. The Bank of Israel's commitment to expanding the Israeli welfare state does not sit well with the neo-conservative ideology of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. For its part, the Ministry of Finance has backed substantial increases in public spending in Arab localities, an expression of liberalism that is at odds with the ethnonationalist orientation of recent Israeli governments. Against this background, it would be naive to read the OECD's report with which we began, and its criticism of Israeli policies, as an impartial and objective assessment. Rather, these positions match those of the Bank of Israel and the Ministry of Finance, which provide the OECD with the information it requires to assemble reports.

The 2011 social protests facilitated the rise of new political parties that claim to represent the economic interests of the Israeli middle class, Yesh Atid and Kulanu. The heads of both parties managed to secure the position of the Minister of Finance with the express purpose of tackling the grievances of young middle-class families. While embracing neoliberal meritocratic and consumer-based solutions to frustrated economic aspirations, their political need to "deliver the goods" to constituents has generated inevitable conflicts with technocratic elites, who regard some of their policies as futile and irresponsible. It is fair to assume that this opposition also reflected the risks of politicians' policy activism for the status and power accumulated by these elites.

Beyond palace wars between politicians and technocrats who are both committed to the neoliberal agenda, it is unclear whether these indications of recalibration of neoliberalism will suffice to abate the societal discontent that provoked Israel's 2011 protest and similar electoral and extra-parliamentary populist movements elsewhere (Gerbaudo,

2017). Like the adoption of classic liberalism in the nineteenth century, neoliberalism seems to provoke the “countermovement” of social groups demanding that their governments protect them from market forces (Polanyi, 2001). While neoliberalism has liberated the state from forms of state-society coordination and intermediation that were essential to developmentalism and Keynesianism, in the process it has forfeited mechanisms of policy legitimization. Citizens who have been led to expect labor markets to reward them for investing in their own human capital, and competitive product markets to translate those rewards into a rising standard of living, may come to question a moral economy based on depoliticization, marketization, and the imperative of individual self-reliance. Yet the political implications of such discontent are highly contingent. This is especially true in Israel, where a deeply uneven and unequal neoliberal order coincides with an entrenched political tradition of both subordinating and incorporating material interests into identity cleavages (see the chapter by Ram in this volume) and state projects that are capable of mobilizing intense loyalty in the face of real or perceived threats.

NOTES

1. Sources for this paragraph are Shalev, Gal, and Azary-Viesel (2012), updated by the authors using data through 2015 from OECD.stat; and Friedman and Shalev (2010).
2. *World Development Indicators* (SIPRI data) <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS>; and OECD (2016). Over one-third of Israel's actual defense spending is not included in the budget (Wolfson, 2010).
3. The information on arms is from Coren and Cohen (2017); the information on ICT is from *Statistical Abstract of Israel* (2017, diag. 18.4) http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader/shnaton/shnatone_new.htm?CYear=2017&Vol=68&CSubject=30.

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